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ABSTRACT

Against a background of government policy on raising standards and of broadening access to Higher Education and recruitment of teachers in the new millennium, this thesis explores the implications of government policy on promoting standard English for a group of student teachers from non-traditional backgrounds. Focusing on a sample of fourteen student teachers in Essex and London universities, I used semi-structured interviews and a sample of students' written work to investigate their knowledge about standard English and their competence and confidence in using it. I discovered that there is no clearly agreed definition of standard English in the academic literature, the policy documents or in students' own discourse, with definitions focussing more on concrete linguistic features or on social or political aspects, depending on the function and purpose of the definition. Discussion of standard English is further complicated by issues of register and the differences between spoken and written English. I found that non-standard usage in the students' spoken and written English was confined to a few non-standard constructions. They perceived standard English as the prestige variety from which they had been excluded and were disadvantaged more by lack of confidence than lack of competence. I conclude that every effort should be made by those interested in raising standards to move away from a prescriptive account of language and a simplistic evaluation of subject knowledge. To encourage students from a range of language backgrounds to enter the teaching profession, the revised Initial Teacher Training curriculum should reflect a descriptive model of grammar that recognises the power and potential of language in all its forms.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

RATIONALE FOR THE RESEARCH FOCUS

In recent years there have been various government initiatives concerned with broadening access to Higher Education. Unemployment and the increasing demands for ‘paper’ qualifications from employers, access courses and the change of status of former polytechnics and colleges of education into ‘new’ universities have resulted in a generation of students for whom a university education had never been an option in the past. At the same time there has been considerable debate at a political level, often reported in the media, about the lack of competence in written and spoken standard English of many school leavers and, with the introduction of the National Curriculum and inspections by the Office for Standards in Education (OFSTED), there has been an increasing emphasis on the need to raise standards in these areas.

The focus of my research stems from the tension between government initiatives concerned with broadening access to Higher Education and the introduction of flexible routes into Teacher Training (with more time spent in school and less on academic study) on the one hand, and a commitment to raising standards of competence in written and spoken standard English on the other. Recent initiatives have included not only the promotion of partnership models of teacher training, where schools share with a university the responsibility for training, but also the funding of School Based Initial Teacher Training (SCITT), Graduate Teacher Programmes (GTP) and Registered Teacher Programmes (RTP), where most of the training takes place in school. Alongside these initiatives, there are stringent demands that students demonstrate the ability to use spoken and written standard English in interview and demonstrate their literacy skills by passing a national on-line audit before they are awarded Qualified Teacher Status (QTS).

My research aims to provide another important dimension to the ongoing educational and political debate on the importance and status of standard English, by examining the views of students who have been, and still are, affected by changing policy on curriculum and pedagogy, and access to

Higher Education. I shall look in particular at the experiences and perspectives of students who, despite limited academic success at school and little tradition of going on to Higher Education in their background, have chosen to embark on a Teacher Training programme.

Focusing on a group of fourteen students, who have gained access to Initial Teacher Training without the traditional qualifications, I hoped to discover:

- 1) What they already knew about spoken standard and written standard English and how that knowledge had been acquired
- 2) How they positioned themselves as speakers and writers in relation to notions of standard English
- 3) What they now felt they needed to know in order to teach children in Primary school to communicate effectively in spoken and written English.

It was envisaged that the analysis of the third research question would be embedded within the answers to the other two questions.

A further central and significant question underpinning the research is:

What are the implications for government policy on access to teacher education of its policy emphasis on spoken and written standard English?

Because the size of my sample is relatively small, it is not possible to address this issue directly. However, I hope that my findings will shed some light on it, even if it is not possible to provide a definitive answer.

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT – RECENT GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES TO IMPROVE STANDARDS IN EDUCATION

Despite a change in government, from Conservative to New Labour in 1997 and their subsequent re-election in 2001, the issue of standards is still high on the political agenda, with phrases such as ‘zero tolerance’ of poor schools and teachers dominating the media. A National Literacy Project (NLP) to improve the teaching of literacy in Primary schools was piloted in approximately 250 schools from autumn 1996 to summer 1998. As a result of a positive evaluation by the National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) (1998), from September 1998 most Primary schools have

been implementing a daily literacy hour as part of a National Literacy Strategy (NLS). In addition to this, in 1997 the first National Curriculum for Teacher Training Institutions (Circular 10/97) was introduced, aimed at improving the quality of teacher training. It contained prescriptive requirements for students' own subject knowledge of the grammar of standard English and how it should be taught, as part of the endeavour to raise standards of literacy in schools. Originally instigated by the Conservative government under the auspices of the Teacher Training Agency (TTA), it was soon replaced by 'Teaching: High Status, High Standards Requirements for Courses of Initial Teacher Training' (Circular 4/98) and was adopted by 'New Labour', as part of their political agenda to prioritise education and provide equal opportunity for the nation's children. The adoption of similar educational policies by the two main political parties is an area I shall return to in Chapter 2 when I discuss the ideologies behind the various models of language, which have been adopted in our schools over the last twenty-five years.

The debate about threatened standards in English has been waged since the early twentieth century (e.g. Halliday, McIntosh and Stevens 1964; Ball 1985). In 1983 J. Honey in *The Language Trap: Race, Class and Standard English in British Schools* suggested that it was 'a group of specialists in linguistics, widely influential among teachers of English and those who train them' (Honey 1983) who were undermining schools' attempts to promote standard English by stressing that all varieties were equally good. In 1997, to considerable media attention, he published *The Power Of Language: Standard English And Its Enemies* in which the same sentiments were reiterated. *The Language Trap* debate proves to be as controversial as ever, with academics and practitioners taking up strong positions.

The status of standard English and its place in the curriculum is still high on the political agenda. While the academic arguments continue, there is more consensus at a political level. The merging of the views of the political parties of the left and right over the issue of falling standards perhaps helps to explain current government policy towards the promotion of standard English. Teacher Training Institutions have been blamed in some government circles, as reported in certain sections of the press, for promoting a sociolinguistic perspective, which encourages teachers to value

all varieties of English equally, rather than ensuring they know how to teach the basics. A drive towards more central control of education has resulted in a National Curriculum for Teacher Training Institutions (Circular 4/98) being imposed, just as in the past a National Curriculum for schools was introduced.

In three recent policy documents, Circular 4/98, The National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (1998) and The National Curriculum Key stages 1 and 2 (1999), there is an emphasis on standard English, including explicit knowledge of the rules of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Training has been provided for all schools to ensure that practising teachers have the subject knowledge to carry out the new requirements. Despite this, in my experience, there has been a huge demand for in-service modules on English subject knowledge from schools, suggesting that many teachers still feel *insecure with this aspect of their practice*.

Another significant factor to affect my research focus is that universities now have responsibility for recommending their students for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) and this is dependent on students demonstrating they have reached the standards set out in Circular 4/98. These make explicit reference to students' knowledge of grammar and their ability to teach it (Circular 4/98 Sections B and C). This document, under the section 'Trainee Entry and Selection Requirements', also states that:

A i 1.1 For all courses of Initial Teacher Training (ITT),
providers are required to ensure that:

1.1.1 all entrants are able to communicate clearly and
grammatically in spoken and written standard English.

Whether these requirements will impact upon admissions policies and result in more stringent selection procedures for prospective student teachers is yet to be seen. Issues of access and government policy are further discussed in Chapter 2, as this thesis seeks to map access issues against language policy issues.

PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL AGENDA

I am a senior lecturer in English. When I began this research I was teaching on a Primary Bachelor of Education (B Ed) in a new university in Essex; I currently teach in a new university in London. Many of the students in both institutions are from a working class background and are the first generation of their family to enter Higher Education. Most of them have chosen to study at their local institution as they can continue to live at home and this reduces some of the high cost of student loans. A significant number are *mature students, who have family commitments, and consequently need to study in their neighbourhood vicinity.*

A considerable number of these students have the minimum number of 'A' level points required for entry or have been admitted through access courses or have taken special entry examinations. From my discussions with students on the courses it would appear that the new government initiatives to raise standards of literacy are confirming a sense of inadequacy concerning their explicit knowledge of the grammar of spoken and written standard English and reducing their confidence in this area. The prescriptive requirements for students' subject knowledge (Circular 10/97) influenced the content of several of the English modules on offer at the institution in Essex where I was working and Circular 4/98 continues to inform the courses I teach now. When confronted with modules on the structure of English, many students seek tutorial support, complaining that the school education they received has not provided them with explicit knowledge about the grammar of their language. Others are concerned, or in some cases tutors are concerned, about their competence in standard English. In order to be recommended for Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), students need to have acquired a high level (N C Level 8) of subject knowledge and demonstrate they use and are able to teach the grammar of spoken and written standard English.

My own experience is similar to that of the students I teach. I come from a London working class background and was the only member of my family to enter higher education. I trained at a London Institution to teach the primary age range, and then taught locally in London. However, my own language education over thirty years ago, both in Primary and Grammar

school, was very traditional and I felt secure in my knowledge and understanding of grammar, spelling and punctuation. Where I lacked confidence was in spoken English, my accent and dialect having been looked down upon by academic staff both at school and college.

Interestingly the students I teach generally appear at ease, on entry to the university, with their accent and spoken dialect, although they sometimes encounter problems when they undertake their school experience, depending on the catchment area of their school. Some parents and head teachers complain that students' accent and dialect are not suitable role models for their children. Students' own anxieties are focused more around their competence in written English and their knowledge of grammar.

As I have now joined 'the academics' responsible for imparting the English subject knowledge prescribed in the National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training, I have both a personal and professional interest in exploring the tensions in the current political climate over initiatives to promote spoken and written standard English and the commitment to broadening access to Higher Education.

DEVELOPMENT OF A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

I developed a theoretical framework for thinking about my research questions by reviewing pertinent literature on linguistic and social diversity, including the relationship between language and identity; government initiatives over the last twenty-five years in relation to improving competence in standard English and related pedagogical issues as to how this might best be accomplished in Primary education. Another important dimension was the principles and practice and related funding issues underpinning broadening access to Higher Education and in particular to teacher training.

Addressing my research questions entailed looking at language use and policy in a cultural, political, economic and educational context. It was against this backdrop that the personal experiences and perspectives of a small group of students were investigated in order to see how large scale changes in educational policy were affecting the individuals who would be responsible for teaching standard English and the grammatical knowledge as

set out in the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) and the revised National Curriculum (NC) (1999).

DEFINING STANDARD ENGLISH

A core concept at the heart of this dissertation is standard English. When I originally framed this thesis I assumed that there was a shared understanding about what constitutes standard English, even if there were disagreements about its status. However, the fundamental problem of defining standard English soon became apparent. On reading related sociolinguistic literature, government policy documentation and research projects on standard English, I was confronted with a range of definitions. I provide a list of those that I refer to in Appendix 1. As I struggled to formulate my own working definition, I became increasingly aware that there seemed to be a distinction between attempts at concrete definitions in terms of actual linguistic features (e.g. in the Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999)) and definitions which focus on the social and political functions of standard English (e.g. Crystal 1995).

Education policy documents (NC 1995, NC 1999, NLS 1998 and Circular 4/98) provided definitions in terms of linguistic features. However, there was a noticeable shift in the language used to define standard English between the 1995 and 1999 National Curriculum documents. The first document states in general terms what should be taught (e.g. ‘the grammatical features that distinguish standard English include how pronouns, adverbs and adjectives should be used and how negatives, questions and verbs tenses should be formed;’). By contrast, the 1999 NC lists in specific terms what common non-standard usages need to be corrected:

- subject-verb agreement (they was)
- formation of past tense (have fell, I done)
- formation of negatives (ain’t)
- formation of adverbs (come quick)
- use of demonstrative pronouns (them books)

The effect is to stigmatise particular constructions. The NLS appeared to combine elements from both NC documents in its description of linguistic features (refer to Appendix 1).

The definitions from the policy documents make little distinction between written standard English and spoken standard English, terms that I use throughout this study. They do not reflect the controversy surrounding the definition and inclusion of spoken standard English in the original National Curriculum. Perera's account of her struggle to define spoken standard English as a member of the original National Curriculum working party (Perera 1994) informed my decision to research students' confidence and competence in these areas separately. Although the 'social shibboleths' she referred to reflected the non-standard constructions of written standard English, the underlying assumption of the debate was that the nature of spoken English resists standardisation. This was a problematic area that I explore in more depth in the literature review and that I return to in my analysis of the students' spoken language and perspectives.

As well as defining standard English by its linguistic conventions, the NLS and Circular 4/98 refer to the function of standard English. Pupils should be taught to 'consider when and why standard English is used' (NLS p.44). It is 'the general, public English used to communicate within the United Kingdom and throughout the English-speaking world' (4/98 p.43). There is no mention of world Englishes, such as American or Australian English.

As I studied the definitions within the policy documents, I became aware of a hidden agenda. Ostensibly the linguistic features identified in the policy documents were open to assessment, thus providing a measure of competence in standard English. However, the definitions were imbued with greater significance by politicians and nation builders. The ability to use standard English would equip everyone with the basic skills needed for the work place, regardless of whether there were enough jobs; standard English would make England a significant presence in the world, despite the impact of other world Englishes; it would unite its citizens, regardless of their different Englishes.

The definitions provided by many sociolinguists on the other hand were more transparent in communicating their purpose. The definitions that I encountered used general terms such as ‘grammar, spelling and vocabulary’, rather than listing specific linguistic features, and emphasised the function of standard English, using words such as ‘educated’, ‘prestige’, ‘status’, ‘institutionalised norm’. They alluded in varying degrees to the power of this form. However, the sociolinguists might also be seen as having a hidden agenda. Their argument that all varieties are equal in linguistic terms could be seen as a rhetorical weapon against social inequality. Similarly their celebration of diversity might be interpreted as part of pursuing a liberal agenda.

The ‘lay’ definitions provided by the students referred to both linguistic features and to the political and social purposes of standard English. Similar shibboleths were identified, ‘I still maintain that *‘we was going’* is grammatically incorrect’ (Interview X). The general consensus was that standard English was the prestige variety. A major difference in students’ definitions of standard English compared to the definitions provided by linguists and in policy documents was the reference to accent in defining spoken standard English, with words and phrases such as ‘nicely’, ‘proper’, ‘not a common accent’ proliferating.

In formulating a working definition of standard English to underpin this thesis, I attempted to combine both concrete linguistic features and the social and political functions of standard English that I identified through my reading in the area of linguistics, government policy documents and that emerged through my own research data. My own position was closer to the sociolinguists, except for my decision to include a reference to accent. I felt the conflation of accent and dialect by the general public and the students was important and should be acknowledged in my definition which is that,

‘Standard English is a variety of English recognised by its choice of vocabulary and certain conventions of grammar in speech and writing, and in writing by adherence to rules of spelling and punctuation. It has high status. It is often associated with ‘correctness’ and in speech with received pronunciation or a modified version of it.’

DEVELOPING A RESEARCH DESIGN

The aforementioned definition emerged from and informed my research design. I decided both to examine the linguistic features that students used and to explore their attitudes to standard English, rather than focussing on one aspect. I felt that looking at both areas and the relationship between them would be a strength of my research.

The Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999), whose brief considered the use of spelling, punctuation and non-standard English in the writing of GCSE pupils, was deemed an appropriate tool to assess the technical aspects of students' writing, as the students in this study are training to be teachers and will be working within a similar framework when assessing pupils' writing. The problems of using a framework that is based on the notion of errors did not emerge until later in the project, when I read Ivanic's research on 'practices' accounts of language (Ivanic 1998). She discusses how 'the mismatch between students' writing and institutional expectations is frequently attributed to a literacy deficit on the part of the students' (Ivanic 1998 p.343). She suggests that 'Institutions of Higher Education need to recognise the full diversity of knowledge, wisdoms and ways with words which new members could bring to them' (p.345). This issue is discussed in the section on 'Access Issues' and 'Language and Identity' in Chapter 2 and in my evaluation of the research tools in Chapters 3 and 5.

I decided to use semi-structured interviews to explore the second aspect of my definition: the social/political functions of standard English. I was interested in how the students positioned themselves in relation to notions of standard English, which was my second research question. This entailed exploring not only their perceptions of their own ability in using standard English, but also their attitudes towards standard English. Their reflections would also provide information on the third research question, 'What do they feel they need to know to teach children to communicate effectively in spoken and written English?' As I have discussed, the definitions within the educational policy documents, while ostensibly focusing on language features, also have political and social purposes.

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION

In this introductory chapter, I have explained the research focus and identified three main research questions. I have provided information on the current political and education context that forms the backdrop to the research. I have also described how my own personal and professional agenda informed the research from its inception to completion and how I developed a theoretical framework to underpin the research questions. I have explained how standard English, a core but difficult concept in this dissertation, is being defined and put into operation to explore students' perspectives and competence.

A detailed rationale for the choice of research fields is to be found in the introduction to Chapter 2, where I formulate key theoretical questions, which underpin my main research questions in each of the identified fields. I review and evaluate relevant literature, research and government policy to broaden my own theoretical understanding of the issues and to inform my analysis of the data.

The data was collected using qualitative and quantitative methods. A rationale for the choice of research methodologies, supported with reference to how they are defined in the literature, and an account of how the research procedures developed are provided in Chapter 3. Key methodological issues are discussed, including the relationship between the researcher and the students and the possible effects on the construction of knowledge. This chapter also explains the relationship between the pilot study that was undertaken in Essex and the main study that was conducted in London. The methods of data collection and the type of information it provides are listed. The recursive nature of the development of methods, as a result of insights gained during the analysis of the data and further reading on methodological issues, is discussed.

In Chapter 4, I provide contextual information on the institutions in which the research was undertaken and on the sample of students. I present the findings from the two studies in Essex and London, drawing out significant similarities and differences and relate them to the changing political and

educational context. I frame my analysis of the findings around the main research questions, which I use as headings to explore the data.

In Chapter 5, I relate my main findings to theoretical ideas discussed at the beginning of the dissertation to demonstrate how this research project contributes to the debate on the relationship between language/literacy use and wider social, political and cultural forces and institutions. I evaluate the methods that I used to collect and analyse the data and discuss how they might have been improved. Finally, I consider the implications of this research project for educational policy and practice and suggest possible forums to disseminate the findings, which should be of interest to the general reader and to fellow professionals in education.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I provide an account of the theoretical framework underpinning the research that was undertaken in two teacher-training institutions on how government policy emphasis on the role of spoken and written English is affecting a group of non-traditionally qualified students. I present a rationale for the decision to focus on two broad research areas, the relative significance of each for this thesis and how they interrelate. I identify key theoretical questions in each area that relate to my research questions and use these to inform my selection of literature and policy documents from the vast range that confronted me. I also use these questions to structure the review of the literature. By exploring and evaluating a range of perspectives on controversial issues, I hoped to broaden my own understanding, as well as that of the reader, of deeply problematic areas.

RATIONALE

This research is primarily located within the broad area of linguistic diversity. It is concerned with the status accorded to standard English compared with other varieties (e.g. Cameron 1995; Honey 1983; Trudgill 1983) and the differences between the spoken and written forms (e.g. Perera 1994; Crystal 1995). It draws upon sociolinguistic theory, particularly ideas concerning the relationship between language/literacy use and wider social, political and cultural forces. The influences of these forces on education will be examined through tracing the government reports and white papers from The Bullock Report (1975) to the imposition of a National Curriculum for schools (1988) and its subsequent revisions (1995, 1999) and new initiatives in the form of a National Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training (1997/8). The models of language and their relation to the political ideology which inform these policies will be explored.

A consideration of variation in the expected uses of language in different settings and the correlation of linguistic diversity and social diversity (e.g. Holmes 1992) is an important feature of the research. I include a focus on 'practices' accounts of language drawn from 'New Literacy Studies', using

the work of Ivanic (1998) on 'Writing and Identity', to discuss the connection between previous language and literacy backgrounds with current practices, beliefs and competences.

The second area of literature is concerned with issues of access. Government policy and practice on widening access to Higher Education is examined in relation to the debate on standards, in particular standards of literacy and competence in spoken and written standard English. Increasing participation is a major issue facing Higher Education in Britain today, as well as internationally, and there is substantial literature dealing with this (e.g. Scott 1995; Wolfendale and Corbett (eds.) (1996)). The need to provide support and guidance and to challenge existing assessment frameworks, which often see academic literacy as a fixed set of principles into which students must be initiated rather than practices that are socially constructed, is particularly relevant in the light of current government policy on the requirement for students to demonstrate competence in both spoken and written standard English at interviews for Teacher Training Courses (Circular4/98). There is a close correlation between the two research areas that I have identified, which deal with issues of language diversity and increased access to Higher Education.

LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY

The broad area of linguistic diversity relates to the dual focus of my research: the effects of broadening access to teacher training and government requirements that student teachers use and promote standard English in the classroom. On the one hand, my main research questions rested on the assumption that some students from non-traditional backgrounds will speak a variety of English that is deemed to be non-standard and use non-standard grammatical features in their writing. This premise assumed that there is a general consensus that there is a variety of English commonly identified as standard English and that there is a shared understanding of what it is. The problem of formulating a satisfactory definition of standard English was discussed in Chapter 1. In the current chapter, I discuss in more detail some of the problematic issues that were identified in arriving at the definition that informs this thesis.

Consequently the *theoretical* questions in relation to linguistic diversity, which underpin this dissertation and are addressed, in the first instance, through a study of sociolinguistic literature, are closely linked to the definition of standard English and the main research questions as set out in Chapter 1. The theoretical questions that I have identified are:

- 1) Does the standard exist and has it ever existed?
- 2) What are the differences between spoken and written English? Who acknowledges them and who doesn't, and why?
- 3) How is the standard implemented, used and evaluated?
- 4) How are issues of national, class and personal identity tied up with what counts as the standard?
- 5) Why is the standard so contested?

I have used these questions as headings to frame the discussion.

Does the standard exist and has it ever existed?

The word 'standard' in conjunction with language seems to have been used for the first time in print as recently as 1858 in Richard Trench's proposal to the philological society that led to the publication of the Oxford English Dictionary' (Wardaugh 1999), although the actual process of standardisation has a much longer history.

A linguistic perspective

Crystal (1995) cites the editor Tom McArthur's entry on standard English in *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (1992): 'a widely used term that resists easy definition but is used as if most educated people nonetheless know precisely what it refers to...' (Crystal 1995, p.110). Trawling through the many definitions to be found in the literature on English, Crystal extracts what he considers to be five essential characteristics and arrives at the following definition:

'[W]e may define the standard English of an English-speaking country as a minority variety (identified chiefly

by its vocabulary, grammar and orthography) which carries most prestige and is most widely understood' (Crystal 1995, p.110).

He points out that it is a dialect that has no local base and that there is nothing in the grammar or vocabulary to tell us which part of the country it comes from. Although there may be no regional association, there is an assumption in Crystal's use of the words 'minority variety' and 'prestige' that it is a class variety and that it confers power on its users. The inclusion of standard English in the National Curricula for schools and Initial Teacher Training suggests that for many children, it is a variety that needs to be taught. Its place in current educational policy is illustrated below.

Educational policy definitions

The teaching of standard English as set out in the NC 1999 focuses on the elimination of five stigmatised non-standard constructions, as listed in the section on definitions in Appendix 1. It is interesting that when The Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999), the framework that I decided to use to assess students' writing, reported on non-standard features in pupils' writing at GCSE, they identified the two most commonly occurring non-standard features as: the non-standard use of prepositions and the non-standard use of the definite/indefinite article, features that are not listed in the National Curriculum 1999 or the NLS (1998). Although there was no analysis of the samples of writing in terms of their regional origin, the report acknowledged that phrasal verbs accounted for the frequency of non-standard preposition use, for example, 'decided to go down the park' and 'that these phrasal verbs reflect an informality of register in writing, sometimes using the characteristics of spoken standard English' (QCA 1999 p.19). The use of register was an area that I identified as problematic when analysing students' writing. Ivanic (1998) also focuses on register in her analysis of students' academic writing, as I discuss towards the end of this chapter.

The origins and development of standard English

The definition of standard English that I formulated at the end of Chapter 1 included the phrase 'certain conventions of grammar'. These conventions

are defined in education policy documents by listing five to seven stigmatised constructions that are commonly recognised as non-standard forms. This tentative definition of what is generally meant by the term 'standard English', problematic though it may be, does provide a frame of reference to enable us to consider the origins of its existence and its relationship to the standard English in current use in Britain. The historical development of standard English has been well-documented (e.g. Baugh and Cable 1978; Crystal 1995). For the purpose of this study, a brief summary, of its first appearance and subsequent development should suffice.

Crystal notes that a regional standardised literary language of Central Midland origin appeared in the late fourteenth century, but that it was unable to compete with the growth of a standard from the London area, as London became the political and commercial centre of the country. However, he draws our attention to the findings of present day historical dialectology, which suggest that the linguistic influence of the Central Midlands counties, as a result of increased immigration to the London area, was equally as important as that of the East Midlands triangle bounded by London, Oxford and Cambridge in the formulation of a standard language. It is interesting that part of Crystal's definition of the standard English of today is that it is a non-regional dialect. The development of printing in the mid fifteenth century was a major factor in the emergence of a southern literary standard. Although there was not complete uniformity, Crystal suggests that the forerunner of standard English was in place by the end of the fifteenth century.

Leith and Graddol (1996) describe the key developments in the English language from the end of the fifteenth century to the nineteenth century. They refer to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as 'the era when Europe, as a whole, developed a radically new political and economic form, that of autonomous nation states each with a 'national' language' (p.136). The political function of standard English is discussed later in this chapter, when I explore issues surrounding national identity and standard English. During the sixteenth century there was an influx of foreign vocabulary. This was resisted by 'purists' without success, just as today conservative forces within our society who are resistant to change bemoan the influence of

‘Americanisms’, which includes not only vocabulary, but alternative spellings and grammatical constructions. The English spelling system gradually became regularised and, with the introduction of the first dictionaries from 1604:

‘a climate emerged which fostered standardisation. Social tolerance of variant spellings came to an end; and as 18th century notions of correctness emerged poor spelling became increasingly stigmatised’ (Crystal 1995, p.67).

This attitude continues to this day, despite the fact that the increasing use of computer programs with spell check tools is beginning to blur the distinction between good and poor spellers, as my analysis of students’ written assignments highlights.

The modern punctuation system also emerged and developed during this time. Standardisation of punctuation occurred after the introduction of printing, but ‘never achieved the same degree of rule bound consistency as appears in spelling’ (Crystal 1995, p.278). As punctuation defines grammatical boundaries, its variation would seem to reflect the dynamic nature of language and what counts as standard English in different centuries. Even though today some uses of punctuation are considered to be features of style, there are some uses which are categorised as errors. An illustration of this in the writing of the students in my sample is the use of the comma splice, which once would have been appropriate as indicating a pause. This is now considered wrong by examining bodies, because it does not adequately reflect the syntactic division in written language. The Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999) defines the comma splice as ‘a term used to describe the use of a comma where a full stop is required, thus splicing together two sentences that should be separate’ (p.8). One of the examples they provide is:

‘I went out on Wednesday night, just for a drink with the girls up the Bull’s Head, there was only Ang, Lizzy, Amy and me but we had a good laugh’ (p.8).

The QCA research states that comma splicing is ‘a consequence of poor understanding of the grammatical and syntactical structure of the sentence’

(p.8). The implication seems to be that a lack of education is responsible. The role of punctuation in defining grammatical units is part of the rationale in educational policy documents for including punctuation as a feature of written standard English.

An alternative view of the comma splice would be that the comma is perfectly adequate for indicating a pause between two units of meaning, especially where the ideas are closely related and that the written form is reflecting the pace and perhaps informality of speech. Ivanic (1998) explores a student's unconventional use of punctuation in a chapter 'A case study of writing and identity'. Ivanic describes how the student, Rachel, 'gives each subordinate clause the status of a full sentence, in order to demand of the readers the time and attention she feels it deserves' (p.148). One could argue that this practice enhanced the writer's meaning.

Another common error, the misuse of the apostrophe for possession, is also often equated with a lack of education, yet its use has changed over the centuries. It was not until the 18th century that it was used to mark the genitive singular and later the genitive plural. The set of rules devised by grammarians at this time for its correct use proved to be somewhat arbitrary, as a result of its complicated history. The lack of an apostrophe in the possessive pronoun 'its' does not follow the apostrophe rule for the genitive singular. Its omission is illogical and the pronoun is often marked with an apostrophe by many students in the university, eliciting strong reactions, perhaps disproportionate to the offence, from tutors (including myself) and external examiners.

In terms of grammatical rules, major changes were over by the time of the renaissance, but it was not until the eighteenth century that rules of grammar were written down in an attempt to standardise the language, just as spelling had been standardised. A prescriptive account of language was established through the publication of grammatical rulebooks. Crystal (1995) records that over '200 works on grammar and rhetoric appeared between 1750 and 1800' (p.78), although the debate about whether grammar should reflect usage or 'evaluate usage, by prescribing certain forms as correct and prescribing others as incorrect' (Crystal 1995, p.79) was already underway.

Barrell's account of the 18th century's attempt to fix the language refers to the emergence of a spoken standard. He acknowledges that it was not the spoken language but the written form, 'as it is to be found in the pages of polite authors' (Barrell 1983, p.155), that Johnson referred to in his *Plan* of the Dictionary, but suggests that the transition from writers supplying the standard of the written language to 'gentlemen as (exemplifying) the standard variety' (Barrell 1983, p.136) was accomplished on account of the latter having the leisure to acquire such knowledge. Barrell states that by obeying the laws of the language, the 'polite' made them and in turn obeyed them. The task was then to persuade people that such customs of language had been freely assented to by all. The reality was that these customs were 'the recent creation of a minority of speakers only' (p.136). This parallels the current situation: standard English (especially spoken) is a minority dialect (Perera, 1994; Crystal 1995), but we are persuaded that it is otherwise. Barrell argues that the imposition of a standardised language in the eighteenth century, rather than uniting the inhabitants of the country, merely confirmed 'the divisions it pretended to heal' (p.111). The divisive effect of spoken standard English is an issue that is referred to by some of my students in interview. Barrell's reference to an historical precedent serves to illustrate the circularity of arguments that have been around for hundreds of years and that continue to engage academics, politicians, journalists and the general public. A relevant issue for this dissertation is the shift from the notion of 'standard' indicating consistency to its identification with 'correctness'. Leith and Graddol (1996) suggest that 'one of the key features of the growth of capitalism was the restructuring of English society along lines of social class' and that 'there arose new attitudes towards 'social correctness' and forms of English that indicated a speaker's social position' (p.137).

Although the grammatical structure of the English language at the end of the eighteenth century is similar to that which we use today, there are distinctive grammatical features in early nineteenth century English, which are no longer to be found in standard English today. Crystal (1995, p.77) provides a list of constructions taken from the narrative or the speech of educated characters in the novels of Jane Austen. They are (1) tense usage, (2) auxiliary verbs, (3) irregular verbs, (4) articles, (5) contracted forms, (6)

prepositions, (7) adverbs. It is interesting to compare Crystal's list with the non-standard constructions cited as most frequently occurring in the analysis of writing of pupils at key stages 3 and 4 (QCA 1999). The two most commonly occurring non-standard features were the non-standard use of prepositions and the non-standard use of the definite/indefinite article. Other non-standard features listed were plural markers on nouns, tense usage and subject verb agreement. An examination of the grammatical features which are considered to be non-standard in the writing from the different centuries reveals the complexity inherent in answering our initial questions about whether the standard exists or has ever existed. The whole notion of change and acceptability is problematic as I discuss in my evaluation of the QCA framework as a research tool in Chapter 5.

The nineteenth century saw an increased emphasis on standardisation, but it was also characterised by 'an increased sensitivity on the part of ordinary users of the language to the range of varieties which existed, and to the social nuances attached to different usage' (Crystal 1995, p.86). Language in use, as opposed to correct usage, was the subject of academic debate, which continued throughout the twentieth century.

The expansion of mass education during the twentieth century saw the stigmatisation of non-standard usage in written English as denoting a lack of education. At the turn of the twenty-first century, not only does non-standard use in written language suggest a lack of education, but so too do non-standard forms in spoken English. Moreover, there is increasing polarity between the public's perception that 'correct grammar' is the grammar of standard English, and the sociolinguists' position that the terms 'standard' and 'non-standard' are more appropriate as all varieties have their own grammar. This was evident in the example cited in Chapter 1, where a student from Essex insisted that a particularly common construction was 'incorrect', rather than 'non-standard' as her tutor suggested.

History suggests that standard English emerged during the fifteenth century. However, the linguistic features that characterise standard English over the centuries have changed. Despite codification, the linguistic features that are considered acceptable have changed gradually as a result of social attitudes.

What are the differences between spoken and written English? Who acknowledges them and who doesn't and why?

To arrive at a working definition of spoken standard English, one has to take account of the characteristics of spoken language which are different from written language, all of which Perera (1994) refers to under the general heading of 'an interpersonal function'. Crystal (1995) also points to the differences in language structure between spoken and written language: 'the grammar and vocabulary of speech is by no means the same as that of writing' (p.291). The main grammatical differences he lists are 'looser constructions, repetition, rephrasing, and comment clauses' (such as *you know, I must say*), as well as 'lengthy coordinate sentences.' The use of comment clauses such as 'you know' were evident in the interview data that I collected and posed problems as to whether they should be interpreted as non-standard forms. Crystal notes that, as well as the use of slang,

'[t]he lexicon of speech is often characteristically vague, using words which refer directly to the situation (deictic expressions, such as *that one, in here, right now*)' (p.291).

Consequently, like Perera, he believes that spoken standard English should not just be seen as an oral version of written English. The problems that I encountered when assessing students' competence in using spoken standard English in interview were the result of the differences between spoken and written language and in particular the use of an informal register that drew upon colloquialisms and slang.

There has always been a continuum between the uses of spoken and written language. Just as a formal speech may be made, so too written language may use an informal register akin to spoken language, for example, in a letter to a friend. Today the distinction between spoken and written language is further blurred with, for example, the use of e-mail and scripted radio talks. The lack of experience in essay writing and the problem of distinguishing between an informal spoken register and a more formal written register in their own academic writing was referred to by several of the students in my sample and was evident in some of their written work. This mirrored the accounts provided in Ivanic's research on literacy

practices (1998), which documents similar difficulties in relation to issues of identity in academic discourse by examining linguistic features and exploring the reasons for their use. I discuss these issues in more depth in my discussion of Ivanic's research later in this chapter.

As a member of the working party for English in the National Curriculum (1995), Perera lost the political battle to have spoken standard English left out of the National Curriculum. Spoken standard English has since become established in educational policy documents as the oral equivalent of written standard English.

The problems that occur when trying to define standard English relate to the differences between spoken and written language and issues of register and the problematic social and political issues that surround the promotion of standard forms of language.

How is the standard implemented, used and evaluated?

Processes of standardisation

In an attempt to answer the first of my research questions, 'Does the standard exist and has it ever existed?', I traced the historical development of what is now defined as standard English. As illustrated in the section on definitions in Appendix 1, it is enshrined in current educational policy documentation as a variety of English that does not include particular stigmatised constructions. In the following section I explore in more detail how during the process of standardisation a minority variety became the prestige variety.

Leith and Graddol (1996) refer to two main dimensions of standardisation, quoting the sociolinguist Einar Haugen. According to Haugen, 'its goals are minimal variation in form; maximal variation in function' (Haugen (1966) 1972, p.107). This would accord with those proponents, such as the linguist Honey, who ascribe a special status to standard English stating that 'the advantages of standard English are its range of styles' (e.g. Honey 1997, p.40). This point is debated in more depth later in this chapter in the section entitled, 'The status of standard English.' Leith & Graddol (1996) also describe four main processes of standardisation using classic terms from

Haugen (1966): selection, codification, elaboration and implementation, which, they state, may happen simultaneously. In the following section I show how historically these processes have operated to produce a standard variety and continue to operate to maintain the standard as a prestige variety.

Selection, Codification and Elaboration

The variety *selected* as standard English was the variety of the most powerful social and economic class located in the London, Cambridge, Oxford triangle, although as discussed in the previous section its origins were complex. *Codification* through the establishment of norms of grammar, vocabulary and spelling occurred in the 17th and 18th centuries with the production of grammars and the first dictionary. The standard form has continued to expand through its use in education and administration, for example, and in terms of new vocabulary (*elaboration*).

Implementation

The process, which is of particular relevance in exploring why other varieties lack status, is ‘*implementation*’. Leith and Graddol’s description of this process is as follows:

‘the standard language must be given currency by making texts available in it, by discouraging the use of alternative language varieties within official domains and by encouraging users to develop a loyalty and pride in it’
(Leith and Graddol 1996, p.139).

The elements they identify within this process are clearly evident in the practice of the two main political parties who have been in power in recent years. Under the Conservative government a canon of literature was drawn up for use in schools to ensure pupils were exposed to classic texts reflecting English heritage. This was enshrined in the National Curriculum (1995). Teachers were also required to correct children’s non-standard speech (NC 1995). The New Labour government, whilst pledging itself to improving the education of all the nation’s children with the implementation of national strategies, used the rhetoric of ensuring England’s destiny as one

of the great nations of the world. Government intervention in promoting standard English in the interest of equal opportunities assumes that cultural unity, rather than cultural pluralism, is what the nation should aspire to (Crowley 1989).

The argument about the nature of language rights in relation to the standard is certainly not a modern phenomenon. It has been going on for hundreds of years. The sentiments of Tony Blair, the prime minister, and those of the linguist John Honey echo the views of Thomas Sheridan in the 18th century. Adopting the standard language, which for Honey includes accent, is to put an end to 'odious distinction'. By the extinction of dialect and local pronunciation, argued Sheridan,

'all natives of these realms would be restored to their birthright in commonage of language which has been too long fenced in and made the property of the few' (cited in Barrell 1983, p.138).

Government policy on implementing standard English, as set out in the National Curricula for schools and teacher training institutions has, whether intentionally or not, been to marginalise other language varieties. A hierarchy is thereby established and notions of superiority and inferiority become manifest. The transition from standard English to correct English to stigmatisation of other varieties is realised.

Consecutive governments' concern with implementing the standard suggests that it needs to be reconfirmed. Blair's political rhetoric in putting education on the agenda and improving standards in basic literacy and his allusions to building one nation, united in a common culture and language, underline his belief in the importance of maintaining and strengthening a standard. At the time of writing, the current government policy emphasis on standard English and assessment appears to be a reaction against the rhetoric that suggested that the liberal education of the seventies and eighties encouraged teachers to value all varieties of English that children brought into school at the expense of teaching basic skills.

Whether the standard needs to be reconfirmed is a contentious issue among linguists and educationalists. Engel & Whitehead (1996) deny that the standard form is under threat:

‘The standard no longer needs to assert itself as the medium of statehood and national identity; it is there, well-established, permeating our lives through bureaucracy, mass media and the information technology revolution’ (p.37).

They suggest that it is other varieties that are fighting for survival. They voice further concerns that the national commitment to promoting standard English, a dialect which is not under threat, would appear to be in direct opposition to educational concerns about many children’s lives and linguistic identities. They suggest that

‘good early years practices in education should have more important aims than holding back a perceived barbarian threat to standards and ensuring a homogenous nationalism’ (p.43).

Certainly, the students in my sample were primarily concerned with valuing children’s ideas, taking into account how they learn as I discuss in Chapter 4, where students’ perceptions on teaching and learning are presented. Leith and Graddol, on the other hand, believe that standardisation ‘has been only partly achieved’ (Leith & Graddol, 1996, p.139).

Over the centuries the mechanisms of the state have been instrumental in promoting standard English for social and political reasons. The conflicting views about how successful standardisation has been and whether it needs to be constantly reconfirmed reflect the different interpretations of the current status of other varieties within the country. The extent of the present government’s intervention in promoting standard English through the education system raises the issue of whether standard English, as defined by particular grammatical constructions or the absence of stigmatised ones, is viable. Is ‘minimal variation in form’ (Haugen 1966), a linguistic definition, appropriate in the twenty-first century, where the social and political issues

surrounding global English and the impact of technology are important influences on language use?

Leith and Graddol (1996) have shown that in the past, reduction of variation in form was achieved through four key agencies:

- '1 close daily interaction in the community;
- 2 the mechanisms of an education system;
- 3 a sense of common cause or group loyalty, perhaps caused by perception of a common threat;
- 4 the presence of a powerful model, such as the usage of a leader, a poet, a prestige group or a set of religious scriptures' (p.139).

It is worth re-examining these four agencies to see how they operate at the turn of the twenty-first century. Although I attempt to examine them separately, they are interrelated as the ensuing discussion reveals.

The first agency, 'close daily interaction in the community', must take account of media and new technologies. On the one hand, the community is exposed to spoken and written standard English through national radio and television programmes and news and national newspapers. However, non-standard forms are evident in the tabloid press and popular television programmes. Also the increasing popularity of e-mail and the World Wide Web may cause non-standard forms of English to proliferate in the written form as well as in the spoken mode, as the distinction between the spoken and written modes becomes blurred. Neither can the impact of world 'Englishes' be ignored (Crystal 1995). American television and the music and film industry are particularly influential, especially for young people.

The second agency, 'the mechanisms of the education system', is illustrated by government imposition of educational reforms. Currently, a unified, authoritarian form of language, whereby particular, stigmatised grammatical constructions are eliminated, is being promoted. Despite the multi-cultural composition of many of our schools, the education system is contributing to the marginalisation of non-standard varieties of English, as the status

accorded to both spoken and written standard forms is now embedded in the National Curriculum for Schools (1999) and also implicit in the ITT National Curriculum (Circular 4/98) and the National Literacy Strategy (NLS) (1998). The resistance to the imposition of a standard form, represented by some linguists and particular communities, is illustrative of 'an intense struggle within us for hegemony among various available verbal and ideological points of view, approaches, directions and values' (Bakhtin, 1981, p.294). These conflicts are also being played out in government policies on education. They are promoting standard English, but are also professing a commitment to broadening access to higher education. The students in my research are affected by the apparent contradictions in these policies.

The third agency for change, 'a sense of common cause or group loyalty, perhaps caused by perception of a common threat', may be interpreted in a variety of ways. The 'moral panic' scenario and the need for scapegoats (Cameron, 1995) is discussed in some detail later in this chapter. Coupled with this, the current preoccupation with standard English perhaps reflects the broader political context, as England finds a new role within the EC. The impact of American English and other global varieties and the dawn of a new millennium and the rise of new technologies may also be perceived as a threat to the traditional connections between British English, British political superiority and 'Britishness.' At the same time there is an internal struggle as members of the United Kingdom assert their own right to self rule and promote their own culture and language.

The fourth agency, 'the presence of a powerful model', is exemplified by those in positions of power, such as government ministers, and the social and economic status of those in well-paid employment who use standard English. Blair's vision of a more equal society is predicated on access to spoken and written standard English, hence the emphasis on this prestige variety in the National Curriculum.

It would appear that the last three agencies are very much in evidence in contemporary society. The first agency is problematic because of the impact of globalisation and information technology, but on balance the mechanisms

for maintaining standard English, as defined by Leith and Graddol (1996), as the prestige variety are in place.

Models of language in relation to the standard form

I have examined my original definition of standard English and why in some quarters it is seen as a prestige variety by referring to interpretations of its historical development and the processes of standardisation. I shall now discuss the implementation of standard English in our schools. To do this I shall examine three different models of language, which I believe governments in the second half of the twentieth century have drawn upon, and examine the ideologies which support these models. I shall consider how far the particular models and their underlying ideologies have influenced teaching methods. The link between language and power and the role of education is important, and the three models of language that I discuss illustrate this relationship. I shall relate these models in more detail to the political climate in which they developed in my discussion of the historical background to the introduction of a National Curriculum for schools and for Initial Teacher Training later in this chapter.

The three models of language that I intend to discuss, Structuralism, the Social Model and the Postmodern Model are the subject of a paper written by Graddol (1994), entitled 'Three models of Language Description.'

Structuralism

Graddol (1994) describes how in the twentieth century, the contribution to modern linguistic theory by linguists, Ferdinand de Saussure (1916) and Noam Chomsky (1957) was the culmination of an approach to language, which focused on the material substance of the language and saw it as amenable to some kind of methodical analysis. Although a distinction is made between 'langue' and 'parole' (Saussure) and 'competence' and 'performance' (Chomsky), Graddol maintains that in this model 'language' is still an autonomous mechanism whose structure can be analysed independently of the social context of its use. More recently Pinker (1995) has reformulated this theme: language is an autonomous mechanism because it has its roots in 'a distinct piece of the biological make-up of our brains' (Pinker 1995, p.18).

Both the Saussurean structuralist approach to grammar, which sees language 'as a system of elements in certain structural relations' and Chomsky's Transformational-Generative Grammar (TGG), which sees language as 'a system of rules or principles which guide the construction of sentences' (Graddol 1994, p.7) appear to underpin the subject knowledge component of Circular 4/98 and the National Literacy Strategy where text is analysed at word level and sentence level. Graddol argues that, within education, a structuralist theory of language is closely related to a transmission model of communication. Meanings are encoded in texts and are available to any reader who has the skills to decode them.

The National Literacy Strategy (1998) and Circular 4/98 prioritise lexical knowledge emphasising the phonology, graphology, morphology and vocabulary of standard English, implying that the ability to decode and encode is primarily about following and applying rules. It addresses knowledge of the grammar and punctuation of standard English primarily through a prescriptive approach, where the emphasis is on rules and explicit knowledge of terminology. Texts are examined in relation to 'cohesion, layout and organisation' (Circular 4/98 p.46).

In addition to presenting this 'analysable and codifiable' model of language, the way in which it should be taught in schools has also been prescribed. Whole class teaching and guided teaching of ability groups are promoted in the National Literacy Hour. It is not so much that a structuralist model of language automatically entails transmission teaching, but that the rule bound nature of this model of language has often lent itself to this style of teaching.

In his discussion of the transmission model of language, which he suggests that structuralism implies, Graddol (1994) argues that this model of language entails everyone using words to mean the same thing and to conform to 'agreed social practice'. There is no room for diversity in this model. It favours standardisation. Any deviation from the standard is a deviation from 'correctness'. The conflation of 'correctness in language' and the moral correctness of abiding to those rules arises from what Graddol terms 'social authoritarianism'. The implication is 'that those who attempt to meddle with the standard language, or pollute it, are guilty of acts of sabotage' (Graddol 1994, p.11).

Cameron (1995) has expressed similar concerns. Tracing the introduction of the National Curriculum by the Conservative Party, she argues that standard English has acquired another dimension. She illustrates how standard English is linked with a prescriptive model of grammar and is associated with notions of excellence and moral worth. A moral discourse has been introduced, with connotations of good, bad, right and wrong being associated with 'standard'. There is a 'slippage' between linguistic and moral terms. She argues that issues are conflated, so that the underlying message that is put across is that a return to traditional whole class teaching methods, including the teaching of the grammar of standard English, would return the nation to its former glory:

'Conservatives use grammar as the metaphorical correlate for a cluster of related political and moral terms: order, tradition, authority, hierarchy – lose these values and we have the breakdown of civilisation' (Cameron 1995, p.95).

Social model

The second model of language that Graddol identifies is the sociolinguistic model, exemplified in the USA in the work of Dell Hymes (1974) and William Labov (1972) and by Michael Halliday (1978) in the UK. Their sociolinguistic approach underpinned the Bullock Report (1975) and was disseminated in Teacher Training Colleges in the 1960s and 1970s when I was training and teaching in Primary schools. This model of language stresses the importance of context in making meaning and acknowledges 'the complex relationship between language, culture and society' (Graddol 1994, p.13). Graddol notes that, although this model of language accords equal status to all varieties of language, it still identifies them as 'structural entities'. The difference between the first and second model of language is that the speaker chooses to express her/his identity by choosing one variety. A sociolinguistic model of language does not accord intrinsic linguistic status to standard English, but recognises it as one among many dialects. In this model of language 'all language varieties merit study' (Graddol 1994, p.15). The status of standard English resides in the social and political context in which it is used.

This model of language gained some acceptance during the 1970s and 1980s, as England's commitment to multiculturalism and anti-racism influenced the political agenda. A sociolinguistic model of language fitted well with progressive educational ideas. The absence of a hierarchical approach to language varieties was paralleled in teaching methods. There was an undeniable shift from a didactic approach, which saw the teacher as the conveyer of a specific body of irrefutable knowledge, to exploratory methods, where the teacher's role was to enable learning to take place through shared discovery. However, it was not as universally extreme as the opponents of progressive methods and certain sections of the press suggested and continue to suggest. My own experience, and that of many of my colleagues in the profession, indicates that many teachers used a range of teaching methods. The students in my sample discuss the pedagogy they experienced in their own schooling and by inference the models of language to which they were exposed. I refer to their accounts in my description and analysis of findings in Chapter 4.

However, it was the notion of linguistic equality that the more conservative forces in linguistic, education and government circles challenged towards the end of the twentieth century. One such challenge was Honey's controversial booklet *'The Language Trap'*, published in February 1983. Linguists' reactions to this publication and the accompanying media debate are documented by Graddol and Swann in an internal paper produced for the Open University (undated). They divide the responses into three different categories. They suggest the first response strategy sees Honey as subversive, the second as personally insulting and the third as serious enough to be challenged with direct arguments. Graddol and Swann's view was that the pamphlet was best read as a contribution to political rather than academic debate. The ongoing debate on the definition and status of standard English amongst linguists and the lay response to those concerns are discussed later in this chapter in the section entitled 'The status of standard English'.

Post-modern model

The third model of language Graddol discusses is the post-modern model, which reflects 'a broader semiotic view of what language consists of: The

concern with 'signs' rather than words' (Graddol 1994, p.17). In this model, not only are texts jointly constructed but, 'they are comprised of more than one semiotic system interwoven' (Graddol 1994, p.18) and may be received differently by different readers, depending on their experience of other texts. In the post-modern model, therefore, meaning does not reside in the text, waiting to be discovered, but is constructed and reconstructed by different readers in different contexts. An example of this in school might be the use of different media showing how meaning can be made or joint collaboration in constructing and reading texts through the use of e-mail and the World Wide Web. However, the NLS and Circular 4/98 present language as 'a static edifice comprised of sounds, words and sentences' (Sealey 1999, p.21) and do not exploit the creative potential of new technology. This may be because the latter is not easily amenable to assessment, which at present is a prime function of schooling.

I have explored how the three models of language have influenced work in schools in the latter half of the twentieth century. It is the first model of language which is now being promoted in Britain. This reflects the current political ideology: equal opportunity resides not in difference and diversity, but in everyone belonging to one nation state and getting skilled so they can all have access to work.

Current implementation of standard English through educational policy

Bullock and Beyond

In the following section I explore in greater detail the political backdrop to the current educational policy emphasis on standard English and its implementation through the National curricula for schools and Initial Teacher Training (ITT). I examine government policy on the teaching of English, with particular reference to teaching the grammar of standard English, in Primary Schools from 1975 until the present time, in an attempt to understand how and why we now have an unprecedented level of government intervention in education.

I begin with The Bullock Report (DES 1975), as this was the result of a government directive, which had far reaching implications for the teaching of English in schools in terms of content and pedagogy. An inquiry into

reading standards was commissioned in 1972 by the Secretary of State. Under the chairmanship of Sir Alan Bullock, the Committee went beyond its original brief,

‘To consider in relation to schools:

- a) all aspects of teaching the use of English, including reading, writing, and speech;
- b) how present practice might be improved and the role that initial and in-service training might play;
- c) to what extent arrangements for monitoring the general level of attainment in these skills can be introduced or improved;

and to make recommendations’ (DES 1975).

Then, as now, employers were alleging lower standards, complaining that ‘young people joining them from school cannot write grammatically, are poor spellers and generally express themselves badly’ (DES 1975, p.3). However, the reader is referred to the Newbolt Report of 1921 where it is reported similar complaints were levelled by employers:

‘[the] teaching of English in the present day schools produces a very limited command of the English Language’ (Newbolt 1921 quoted in Crowley 1989).

What is of particular import as far as this study is concerned was the evidence from further and higher education institutions ‘on the inability of their entrants to write correct and coherent English’ (DES 1975, p.4) and from heads ‘who have complained of the poor standard of written expression of some of the young teachers who have joined their schools’ (DES 1975, p.4). My own experience in ITT suggests that these concerns are still in evidence. Bullock emphasised the need for teachers to have ‘an explicit understanding of the operation of the language’ (DES 1975 1.11) and asserted that ‘because of the nature of their training this is precisely what many teachers lack’ (DES 1975 1.11).

Any attempt to trace the process of change from the findings of The Bullock Report to the Training Curriculum for Initial Teacher Training must encompass the political backdrop. 1980 to 1997 saw the Conservatives continuously in power. Despite Bullock's assertion that 'colleges of education give too little attention to language', 'An Inquiry into the Teaching of the English Language', under the chairmanship of Sir John Kingman, was not commissioned by the Secretary of State until 1987. Its task was:

'to recommend a model of the English Language as a basis for teacher training and professional discussion, and to consider how far and in what ways that model should be made explicit to pupils at various stages of education' (Ch 1.3).

The model Kingman Committee recommended took account of 'the forms and uses of the English language' (6), that is they took a functional approach to language. What is significant in the light of current policy is that teachers and teacher trainers were given autonomy, 'teachers and teacher trainers can choose aspects of that model that are appropriate to their needs' (17). It has taken another decade for this freedom to be eroded with the introduction of the NLS and Circular 4/98, which are highly prescriptive in both subject knowledge and methodology.

The Kingman Report (DES 1988) was unanimous in its insistence that, 'one of the school's duties is to enable children to acquire standard English which is their right. This is not a matter of controversy: no item of evidence contained disagreement with this point' (2.19). Although criticised in some quarters for ignoring social variation in language (Cameron and Bourne 1988), for many linguists who favoured a descriptive rather than a prescriptive approach to language, a strength of the model it recommended was that pupils should be shown 'the systematic ways in which the grammar of some dialects differ from the grammar of standard English' (3.20). Again the professional judgement of teachers is upheld: 'It is for the teacher to decide how much of that knowledge is made explicit to a pupil or class at a given moment and how it might be done' (4.15). That recommendation is far removed from current educational policies.

The final chapter of the Kingman Report was devoted to 'The Education and Training of Teachers': 'The most important aspect of this report is the training of those who teach and are to teach' (6.19). The recommendations were that the courses include 'a substantial component of tuition in language study' and 'that all providers of pre-service training for the teaching profession redesign their courses' (6.7). Many institutions, including the ones where I have worked, acted upon this recommendation and knowledge about language (KAL) became a significant component in the language modules undertaken by the students. Currently ITT providers are again redesigning their courses but this time they are having to include the prescriptive rules of grammar that students need to pass their on-line audit in 2001 in order to achieve QTS.

The original National Curriculum for English was intended to reflect a more conservative stance to the teaching of English than the model proposed by Kingman. It was still not favourably received by the right wing and Cox (1995) suggests that it was misrepresented by the media. The revised National Curriculum for schools came into effect on the first of August 1995. The emphasis on standard English was unequivocal. Each Attainment Target had a sub-heading 'Standard English and Language Study.' Examples of non-standard usage that needed to be corrected were provided as early as Key Stage 1. Dialects were mentioned only in relation to knowledge and understanding of the standard form rather than as being of worth in their own right. There was no mention of how dialects might contribute to pupils' self-worth or identity. The latest National Curriculum (1999) is even more explicit in the details of what is to be taught. The headings have changed once again and now include two separate entries, one of which is Standard English, the other Language Structure. The National Curriculum 1999 makes explicit reference to the NLS. Consequently the teaching of grammar has a central place.

I have shown how the promotion of standard English including the explicit teaching of the grammar of this variety has become an essential part of the current National Curriculum for English. This is reinforced by the requirements of Circular 4/98. From 1 September 1998, to be recommended for Qualified Teacher Status, trainees must demonstrate not only detailed

knowledge and understanding of English grammar, spelling and punctuation but also how it should be taught, for example, ‘teach **grammar** systematically, through; direct instruction on grammatical rules and conventions’ (Section B f ii, p.19). The implications this has for students who do not have explicit knowledge of grammatical rules and who may lack confidence in this area is discussed in the Section on Access Issues later in this chapter, where issues of access to HE and teacher training in particular are explored.

Implications of Circular 4/98

Not only does there appear to be a political consensus on language policy, but control of funding through the Teacher Training Agency and OFSTED monitoring of schools and teacher training are intended to ensure that it is implemented. The return to teaching standard English through teaching explicit grammatical knowledge is still contentious. Cameron (1997) tackled the question ‘What do teachers need to know about grammar?’ in response to SCAA’s sample Key Stage 3 tests by demonstrating that the knowledge demanded by these tests was both arbitrary and superficial. She argued that teachers’ own knowledge of grammar should have more emphasis ‘on general principles to do with method and argument’ (p.237), rather than on minute grammatical distinctions. She states that

‘[t]eachers need to be *confident* (my italics) that they can use a small set of principles to find out a larger set of facts, and show their pupils, at whatever level may be appropriate, how to do the same thing’ (p.237).

Cameron echoes the concerns of many currently in Teacher Training, when she laments that

‘since introducing grammar into the curriculum (the powers that be) have reduced rather than increased the time available for trainees to develop their own knowledge in new areas’ (p.237).

Teachers need factual knowledge about language to be able to make critical positions such as ‘all varieties of a language are equal’ their own; otherwise

these statements remain 'mere dogma, something you believe, or not, according to ideological conviction' (p.237).

The reality for students on Primary ITT courses of which I have experience is very different. Grammar is being taught but there is a danger that because of time constraints, because many students lack prior explicit grammatical knowledge and because of the pressures engendered by the audit of subject knowledge and the NLS requirements that grammar is being reduced to formal rules. And students want grammatical knowledge. Cameron cites one of her students who attended her grammar sessions: *'Before this, I didn't even know what an adjective was. I'm not saying that knowing's changed my life but it is nice to know'* (p.238), a sentiment echoed by the students in my research. However, there is limited opportunity for students to use such acquired knowledge to critically evaluate ideological positions.

The notion of empowerment is at the heart of this debate about language. As Cameron (1997) states

'There is nothing wrong in wanting to set standards of excellence in the use of language. Rather what is wrong is the narrow definition of excellence as mere superficial 'correctness'' (p.115).

How this is best achieved for all classes, ethnic groups and different abilities should be informed by independent research. It is intended that the next section of this chapter and the data collected in interviews for this dissertation on the perspectives of student teachers, who may come from non-standard English speaking backgrounds and may lack confidence in their knowledge and use of this variety, should contribute to the debate.

How are issues of national, class and personal identity tied up with what counts as standard? Why is the standard so contested?

The final theoretical questions that frame this section of the literature review relate to the political and social dimensions of standard English.

The status of standard English

The superior status accorded to standard English over other varieties in both the National Curriculum and Circular 4/98 is the culmination of a battle for the language which has been waged publicly in the last decades of the twentieth century. The position of standard English in our education system as a prestige variety now seems assured. However, the history and development of standard English and research into the nature of language itself suggest that standard English is a minority variety whose prestige is the result of social factors. To understand why the status of standard English and its place in the National Curriculum are still contested by some linguists and educationalists is to recognise that language and politics are inseparable.

I have demonstrated earlier in this chapter that the status of standard English is linked to its historical development. However, historical development may be interpreted in different ways. Cameron (1995), in her preface to *Verbal Hygiene*, summarises the approaches to writing the history of standardisation. She suggests that the traditional approach stresses social concerns. The impetus for standardisation lay,

‘in the dialectal diversity that followed Anglo-Norman rule. In Anglo-Norman rule in England, S.E. Midland variety was selected for written communication and its norms codified’ (p.41).

She points out that revisionist historians, on the other hand, emphasise that,

‘Standardisation served a particular set of class interests; those of the economically and politically dominant South-easterners. Standardisation was not a response to a communicational need it was the authoritarian creation of a small self-serving elite’ (p.42).

The interpretation of events reflects one’s political credo.

The current promotion of standard English within the education system is still a political issue. Wardaugh (1999) points out that acquiring standard English and the ‘rights’ that go with it may be daunting:

‘Education that has such goals is by no means neutral. It is also an education into a common morality and one that requires us to show respect for certain types of authority... It is a game that serves the ends of powerful interest groups and the state’ (Wardagh 1999, p.156).

Cameron (1995) suggests that the whole debate over falling standards, which includes the devaluing of non-standard varieties of English, is politically manufactured and exacerbated by the mass media. She refers to various ‘moral panics’ (Cohen 1987), where ‘public reaction is disproportionate to the actual problem faced’ (Cameron 1995, p.81) and shows how anxieties in society are directed toward a scapegoat. The important factor is that a moral panic ‘will only take hold if it mobilises more general anxieties.... These tend to be about social changes’ (p.84). Sections of the community feel threatened:

‘Moral panics cluster round obvious points of conflict: race, class, gender, generation, sexual practice and political dissent. They promote a conservative response aimed at containment not amelioration and locate the threat in a subordinated group’ (p.85).

Cameron suggests that language is a code for issues of race, class and gender. The debate over the status of standard English is a debate about the state of the nation. This is why it is so contested.

Jean Aitchison (1991) also explores attitudes to change in *Language Change: Progress or Decay*. Quoting Saussure: ‘Time changes all things: there is no reason why language should escape this universal law’ (Aitchison 1991, p.4), she reminds us that in all areas of life humans try to prevent change, because in many areas, not least life itself, change is associated with decay: ‘an attempt to preserve life unchanged seems to be a natural reaction to insecurity, symptoms of growing old’ (Aitchison 1991, p.7). She also suggests that ‘the puristic attitude towards language has its origins in a natural nostalgic tendency, supplemented and intensified by social pressures’ (Aitchison 1991, p.13).

Like Cameron, Aitchison acknowledges that the idea of a golden age is reflected in current education policy and that the return to whole class teaching, unquestioning obedience, respect for authority, tried and tested teaching methods evokes an illusory time when all children left school being able to read and write. However, unlike Cameron she believes that resistance to change and nostalgia for the past are fundamental aspects of the human condition. They may be encouraged by social and political forces, but they are part of what it is to be human.

Aitchison's argument that 'language change is natural and inevitable and is due to a combination of psycholinguistic and sociolinguistic factors' (Aitchison, 1991, p.221) does not lead her to reject the promotion of a standard form. Her rationale for the adoption of a standard language reflects the traditionalist interpretation of its development, cited by Cameron in the introduction to this section. Mutual comprehension is the goal: a standardised language is a variety that all the population can use.

My analysis of the data that I have collected for this thesis and my interpretation of the historical development of standard English do not lead me to the same conclusion as Aitchison. Moreover, her concluding statements that

'once standardisation has occurred and the whole population has accepted one particular variety, it becomes a strong unifying force and often a symbol of national pride' (Aitchison, 1991, p.217)

is one with which many historians and sociolinguists would take issue. For example, Cameron, points out that

'rules of language use often contribute to a circle of exclusion and intimidation, as those who have mastered a particular practice use it in turn to intimidate others' (Cameron 1995, p.12).

Wardaugh (1999) reiterates this:

‘[I]f we know and observe traditional rules for using apostrophes and circumflex accents we can feel superior to those who lack this knowledge. We can accuse them of ignorance, even of laziness. We can use language to classify people and to assert some kind of superiority’
(p.102).

Several of the students that I interviewed had experienced such attitudes and this influenced their perceptions of standard English, as I illustrate in my analysis of the interview data.

Issues related to the status of spoken standard English

The discussion about the status of standard English has centred primarily on written standard English, because it is more easily codified and codification itself was instrumental in the emergence of a standard form. Despite different views on its status, there is a general consensus that schools should teach their pupils to write standard English. A more contentious issue is the place of spoken standard English in the curriculum. Those who advocate the teaching of spoken standard English usually present it as an oral equivalent of written standard English, which may be spoken in any accent. I have argued earlier in this chapter that the whole notion of a spoken standard form depends on how important one believes the differences between spoken and written discourse to be. The interpersonal nature of spoken language, the complexity of informal register use and the difficulty of separating accent and dialect in some instances became increasingly apparent in my attempt to analyse students’ spoken English and made me question whether spoken standard English is definable in this way.

Legislating for spoken standard English in schools and teacher training establishments and to insist on its use elevates it to a prestige variety to the detriment of other dialects and is for political and social reasons rather than on linguistic grounds. The implications of current initiatives are also important because spoken language is closely linked to notions of personal identity, an issue that I return to throughout the following sections and in Chapter 4.

Dialect may be indicative of regional background, but it may also be indicative of social background. Regional dialects indicate where a person is from; social dialects signal where they are in the social structure. Both may incur disparagement, especially in a culture that accords prestige to the dialect of standard English. Not only does the region and social class a speaker comes from affect the varieties of language that they use, other factors such as age, gender, ethnic background and education will influence their speech. The students in my sample discuss these issues when they reflect on their language histories. Dialectologists may use the term *idiolect* to refer to the variety of language spoken by an individual.

‘There has been an increasing interest in more specific aspects of a speaker’s lifestyle and patterns of interaction that might lead him or her to adopt a particular variety of language’ (Graddol, Cheshire and Swann 1993, p.20).

Because of the difficulties inherent in the concept of social class, Milroy (1987) preferred to look at what she termed networks of relationships. She believed that it was the network of relationships that a person belonged to that exerted the most powerful influences on their linguistic behaviour. Network relationships are unique in the way that social class categories are not. What is particularly interesting in understanding my own linguistic background and the ‘upwardly mobile’ students in my sample is her observation that whom a person associates with regularly may be more ‘real’ than any feeling he or she has of belonging to this or that social class (Milroy 1987).

Wardhaugh (1992) observes that distinguishing among social classes in modern urban societies is becoming more difficult with the growth of twentieth-century egalitarianism, yet New Labour’s stated intention in promoting standard English to bridge the socio-economic divide would suggest that social divisions are still significant. Milroy (1992) argues that while there are

‘[s]trong institutional pressure in formal situations to use varieties approximating to the standard, so also effective

sanctions are in force to promote 'vernacular' use in non standard domains' (Milroy 1992, p.21).

This view that speech communities are not unidimensional in which the 'legitimate' language is basic but that there are competing social values, based on contrastive values of status and solidarity (Woolard 1985; Milroy 1992) contrasts with 'Bordieu's view of a single dominant linguistic market where the rule of the 'legitimate' language is merely suspended by the 'vernacular'' (Milroy 1992, p.210).

Accent; its social significance

As previously mentioned, according to linguistic and educational policy definitions, accent should be irrelevant in the discussion of standard English. The reality is that there is confusion among the general public about the difference between accent and dialect. Indeed several students in their interviews conflated accent and dialect. This is not surprising as the dialect of standard English is unusual in that it may be spoken with different accents. Accent and dialect usually go together, to the extent that we often consider an accent as an integral part of a particular dialect. We often detect the regional or social background that a person comes from in the first instance by their accent rather than by features of grammar or lexis. Issues related to maintenance of accent signifying working class solidarity are complex. For example, Wardaugh cites Milroy's research (1980, 1987), which takes account of gender variables. Milroy suggests that males and young working class females opt for solidarity, whereas older females often opt for prestige (Wardaugh 1992, p.203). As I have discussed, this is further complicated by the notion of individuals' perceptions of their identity at different times and how this may affect their allegiances to different groups. For example, increased confidence may enable an individual to revert to an accent that they were led to feel ashamed of. Issues related to generation, gender, and changing identity, as well as class and region are reflected in the data that I have collected.

Honey (1989) explores the issues surrounding accent in a controversial book, '*Does Accent Matter?*'. In a chapter headed, 'Are some accents better than others?', he subverts the work of influential linguists in the field of

dialectology to argue that it is because of the stigmatisation of certain accents that they should be eradicated. He states that the five most stigmatised accents are identified with 'lower classes in certain large industrial conurbations' (Honey 1989, p.67). He uses research findings, which illustrate the prejudice towards working class people in economically deprived areas, to promote the acquisition of an RP accent as a way to remove social inequality. This seems to be an incredibly simplistic view which ignores the dubious ethics such social engineering would entail and the point above about the impossibility of cloning people in this way. Instead he argues that every community recognises a quality of 'well-spokenness'. This would seem questionable in the light of research cited in Trudgill (1983), where American, Canadian and Irish listeners evaluated accents very differently to their English counterparts. Any inherent aesthetic value would seem to be disproved. In England the response to accents is influenced by a whole range of factors which Honey ignores.

I found the research on response to accent particularly interesting with regard to attitudes that I encountered whilst carrying out my research in Essex and London on students' use of standard English. Students on school experience are often judged by their accent rather than specific non-standard grammatical usages. In addition, school experience supervisors do not necessarily distinguish between accent and clear diction when compiling reports on students. Although I am not citing this as research evidence, the context in which I am working, coupled with the interview data I have collected, have made me aware of how important attitudes to accents are and this might prove an interesting area to explore in a broader study. In this particular instance, I would agree with Honey that non-standard uses 'appear to be magnified when spoken in a non-standard accent' and that 'this is a subject crying out for serious empirical research' (Honey 1989, p.143).

The retention or elimination of an accent (or a dialect) may reflect the changing identity of individuals as they interact in different networks of relationships. For example, social mobility in Britain, mostly facilitated by the education system, results in many people modifying their language and moving towards standard English and a modified RP accent. Issues such as

the link between language and personal identity and whether identity is fixed and how this impacts on students' perceptions of their 'real' self are explored in Ivanic's research on literacy practices (1998), which I discuss in the next section.

Language and identity

My study builds upon the research undertaken by Ivanic (1998), in particular the work on '*Writing and Identity*', which focuses on the issue of the discursal construction of identity through linguistic analysis of academic writing and the observations of the writers themselves. Ivanic draws upon previous research on mature women students entering Higher Education (Moss 1987; Hockey 1987; Gardener 1992), where crises of confidence are described. Ivanic looks at the ways in which the demands of academic writing cause people to 'change their speech', to take on particular identities and 'the demands and dilemmas they face' (p.115) as a result. Her research examines actual linguistic features to reveal 'the interplay between content and form'. She also discusses with the students in interview the problematic issues that arise from owning 'the content but not the form' (p.237).

Ivanic's research is particularly relevant to my own research which focuses on a group of mature women students to examine their perceptions of standard English through interviews and their ability in using this variety through the analysis of linguistic features. My interview data illustrates how the students' confidence and sense of identity were affected by the status accorded to spoken and written standard English in their own education, in their previous work experience and in the National Curricula for schools and Initial Teacher Training, while the examples of their spoken language and writing provides information on their competence. In the following sections I discuss significant points from Ivanic's study that relate to my research.

Identity – a definition

I use the term 'identity' in the way Ivanic uses it as 'the everyday word for people's sense of who they are' and 'to signify the plurality, fluidity and complexity of selfhood' (p.10). Ivanic suggests that the self does not consist of a person's life history, but of the interpretation they are currently putting

on it. Drawing upon research that explores changes and continuity in identity across a life span, she cites Handel's (1987, p.331) proposal that people have four different selves: a present self, a retrospective self, a desired self and a prospective self and discusses these in relation to considering the identity of mature students as they engage in higher education.

Discourse(s) and literacies

Ivanic proceeds to examine how discourse(s), which she defines as 'verbal language in its social context' and literacies 'the culturally shaped practices surrounding the use of written language' relate to identity. She suggests that

'individuals are constrained in their selection of discourses by those to which they have access, and by the patterns of privileging which exist among them, but this does not dry up alternatives altogether' (p.23).

Ivanic also refutes the idea put forward by certain sections of the media that students are literate or illiterate, preferring to see students in the process of extending their repertoire of literacy practices. The struggle to accommodate discourse and literacy practices is particularly relevant to the students in my sample. Their attempts to maintain their 'autobiographical' self to show solidarity with their roots (Milroy 1980), while broadening their spoken language repertoire as they enter the work-force and Higher Education and take on the role of the teacher is discussed in Chapter 4. The notion of students being in the process of extending their literacy practices, rather than the perception of their written language as a deficit model is further discussed under the heading 'Learning Support Models' in the section on Access Issues at the end of this chapter.

The status of academic writing

Ivanic distinguishes between those who see academic literacy as a fixed set of principles into which students must be initiated and those who recognise that such practices are socially constructed. Ivanic's account of petitioning to have a student's thesis written in the genre of a novel reminded me of my own experience of wanting to write part of this thesis in non-standard

English, to privilege my own non-standard dialect, and being advised against it by the course tutors, even though their research interests were in sociolinguistics. Even those linguists who critically engage in discussion of the gate-keeping power of language do not challenge the conventions by using anything other than academic discourse. However, the two examples cited above suggest that the writers were able to make a choice. For many students, lack of familiarity with academic discourse confirms 'a sense of inferiority, a lack of confidence in themselves, a sense of powerlessness, a view of themselves as people without authority' (Ivanic 1998, p.33). Certainly the experience of several of the students in my sample mirrored the experiences of the writers in Ivanic's research. They were uncertain whether they had a right to be members of the academic community and for similar reasons, such as class background, age, gender and 'previous failure in the education system' (p.88).

Ivanic's discussion of plagiarism is of particular interest and relevance in relation to my exploration of students' confidence and competence in writing academic assignments. Her premise was that if students think of themselves as inferior and the language they use to express their ideas is neither valued nor accepted, they appeal to the authority of 'experts'. Ivanic argues that

'in order to become a member of a community, to take on its discourse, it is necessary to try it out in some way, and it is extremely difficult to draw the lines between plagiarism, imitation and acquisition of a new discourse' (p.195).

Her point that 'acquisition of discourses involves acquiring characteristics of sentence structure as well as lexis' (p.201) means that students who use a non-standard dialect are doubly disadvantaged when writing in an academic discourse.

Linguistic features of academic writing

Ivanic draws out the distinction between written and spoken language:

‘The complexity of written language is its density of substance, solid like that of a diamond formed under pressure. By contrast, the complexity of spoken language is its intricacy of movement, liquid like that of a rapidly running river’ (Halliday cited by Ivanic 1998, p.87).

This description reflects the differences between spoken and written language discussed at the beginning of this chapter. However, it accords equal status to spoken language, which my students felt more comfortable with, as to written language. Both forms are described as complex. These definitions enable Ivanic to provide a positive account of her mature students’ language, stating that ‘[t]hey were used to pursuing knowledge and understanding through interaction’ (p.262), using the river metaphor.

Ivanic elaborates on Halliday’s phrase to describe written language, ‘density of substance’, to consider academic discourse:

‘long nominal groups, embedded clauses and a high proportion of lexical words characterise language in which ideas are compacted, often as a result of slow, premeditated composition practices’ (p.268).

In her research she integrates linguistic analysis of texts with analysis of interviews about them to reveal ‘the discursive construction of identity’ (p.119). She also considers how their writing was received by the academic community. I discuss those of her findings which relate to my own research.

There were several interesting issues relating to voice. Sometimes Ivanic’s students avoided the use of the first person, because they felt that ‘intellectual work is an impersonal activity’ (p.271). She observed that the students had to take on ‘the perspective not just of the academic community, but of a sub-community within it’ (p.278) and that at times they were established members of that community and at other times apprentices (p.295). This was particularly true of my sample of students who had to write as ‘trainees’ describing their work in schools, but also as members of the academic community of the university. Ivanic also refers to the double standard that would seem to be operating in academic writing. Students cannot ‘tell it like it is’ and use ‘street talk’ (p.245), as ‘colourful language

is not given a high priority by the academic community' (p.318). Similar issues relating to register, the demands of academic writing and the relationship between spoken and written discourse arose from my data as I discuss in chapter 4.

ACCESS ISSUES

As previously stated the second research area to form part of the theoretical framework relates to access issues. The overarching questions that I have identified and use to frame this section of the Literature Review are:

- 1) What are the principles and values underpinning the government's avowed commitment to broadening access to Higher Education?
- 2) How do these equate with government policy and practice on broadening access to teacher training and raising standards?

It is necessary to reflect upon the ideology underpinning the provision of mass higher education before examining government policy, practice and funding in this area and the challenges facing Higher Education in implementing quality provision. The introduction of more flexible routes into teaching will be examined.

What are the principles and values which underpin the government's avowed commitment to broadening access to Higher Education and how are they realised?

Equal Opportunities

HE has traditionally been elitist and selective. Despite the expansion in HE with over a third of young people going to college (The Dearing Report 1997), figures from HESA reveal an increasingly polarised HE sector. The 1998-99 admissions statistics were interpreted in Guardian Education July 18th 2000 (page reference unknown) as revealing that

‘the vast majority of students among the elite research institutions [were] from the white middle classes, and usually straight out of school. Student bodies in the former

polys, particularly in London, reflect much more closely the broad ethnic and class mix of society as a whole’.

These statistics reflect the concerns voiced by Corbett (1996) that there is a danger that a three-tier system is being established: the elite universities, the newer universities and the former polytechnics, which ‘could foster negative labelling of both students and institutions and reinforce long-held prejudices’ (Corbett1996, p.165).

However, imperfect as the system may be, the last decade has seen significant changes, with the transformation of polytechnics into new universities. Both the Conservative and Labour governments have averred a commitment to the expansion of HE, which has entailed ‘a more flexible view of entry criteria that truly opens up HE to many who missed opportunities earlier on in their lives’ (Wolfendale 1996, p.2).

Lifelong learning

Such a commitment to broadening access is underpinned by the conception of lifelong learning. Wolfendale (1996) notes that when, in 1995, the then Conservative government produced a draft document, ‘Lifetime Learning’, it accepted two fundamental premises:

‘that we continue to be learners all our lives and that there should be continuing life long opportunities to learn in a formal sense... as well as informal and incidental ways’ (p.14).

Whilst recognising that the intention behind these initiatives are economic as well as humanitarian, Wolfendale is positive in her affirmation that

‘we will enter the new millennium with an altered conception of higher education, one which acknowledges and seeks to foster and support the latent talent of its students, without compromising quality in learning and teaching’ (p.14).

Appropriate Learning Support Models

Rather than focussing on the continuing debate about falling standards as a result of lax HE entry requirements, Simpson (1996) suggests we consider how the needs of present day students are being met. Widening access means that there are a greater number of students with increasingly diverse backgrounds and educational experiences. Coupled with this are more recent developments in the organisation of the curriculum brought about by modularisation and flexible modes of study to take account of the domestic and financial situation of many students. To maintain quality assurance in teaching and learning and to avoid fragmentation and accommodate the increasing demands on students, who are attempting to juggle personal commitments with formal education, appropriate learning support mechanisms are essential.

Simpson (1996) argues that the difficulties students encounter are often viewed from a deficit model position and that this possibly originates from the notions of cultural and verbal deprivation, which was attacked by Labov in the US in his article , 'The Logic of non-standard English' (Labov 1972), where he argued that:

'[t]here is no connection between non-standard English dialects and lack of ability in concept formation and that verbal deprivation theories can easily become self-fulfilling prophecies further hindering the scholastic achievement of ethnically different backgrounds' (p.179).

Ivanic (1998) also recognises that

'[t]he mismatch between students' writing and institutional expectations is frequently attributed to a literacy deficit on the part of the students... that the most common response is to set up some sort of "fix-it" study skills provision, with the aim of remedying this irritating literacy deficit as quickly and as cheaply as possible' (p.343).

Hurley (1994) suggests that not only should the individual's needs be reviewed but also the role of the institution in diagnosing and responding to those needs. This would encompass a wider interpretation of assessment to include needs analysis and action planning and take account of personal and academic experience and acknowledge that some students require additional support at key points in their continuing education. Simpson (1996) reflects a similar view suggesting that the learning development entitlement should be monitored pre-entry, on entry, on programme and on exit. These issues are further discussed in relation to ITT provision later in this chapter.

The related issue of funding for Higher Education

Statistics reveal that increased participation in HE has occurred yet The Dearing Report On Higher Education, Higher Education In The Learning Society (July 1997) found that the expansion in Higher Education, with almost a third of young people going on to college, has taken place 'against a background of unit cost reduction of more than 40 % over the last 20 years'.

The Recommendation (2) to the Government and Funding Bodies is that:

'when allocating funds for the expansion of higher education, they give priority to those institutions which can demonstrate a commitment to widening participation, and have in place a participation strategy, a mechanism for monitoring progress, and provision for review by the governing body of achievement.'

(www.educationlimited.co.uk)

Gosling (1995) had already stressed the need for cost-effective learner support services to avoid increasing rates of failure and resits, suggesting that 'if standards are to be maintained without wasting resources, adequate academic guidance ceases to be an optional matter' (p.7).

For commitment to broadening access to HE to be more than a political slogan, adequate funding and recognition that some institutions will have a large number of students who need support are essential. Issues related to

student loans are also significant in considering the reality of mass expansion of HE. Detailed exploration of funding allocation is beyond the remit of this study: the intention is to draw attention to the dilemmas facing some institutions. Funding arrangements for ITT institutions are, however, discussed in more depth later in this chapter.

How do the identified principles equate with government policy and practice (including funding) on broadening access to teacher training and raising standards?

I relate some of the general principles underlying broadening access to HE that have been identified to the experiences of non-traditionally qualified students embarking on ITT, as well as discuss some issues that are specific to ITT provision.

Equal opportunities, flexible entry requirements and lifelong learning

The TTA web-site, accessed 27/09/00 and 16/09/01, provides a page setting out the basic requirements that students need, in order to be enrolled on an ITT programme (refer to Appendix 2). The previous statutory requirements of a Grade C in English and Mathematics are no longer required. ITT providers can decide whether the required standards in these subjects have been met and may set their own tests. These flexible entry requirements would appear to accord with the principle previously discussed of opening up HE for those who have missed out on educational opportunities earlier on.

Many institutions now provide a range of routes into teacher training. Between them the institutions referred to in this study were running courses that varied in length from one to five years, with students required to spend varying amounts of time in schools. Again, in principle, this range of provision would appear to take account of the different life commitments of students and open up access to Teacher Training. As Wolfendale (1996) points out 'the domestic/financial situation of many students in the 1990s demands patterns/modes of study which do not allow, in their eyes, the luxury of a three year immersion' (Wolfendale 1996, p.19).

However, the situation is again more complex than this account of provision would suggest. Learning support systems and the funding of courses will be discussed in the following sub-sections.

Learning Support Models and Initial Teacher Training (ITT) Provision

In the previous section on Access to HE, learning support models were discussed in relation to the whole student experience and key points in that experience identified: namely, pre-entry, entry, on programme and exit. I intend to ascertain how entrants to ITT are supported at these times.

Although institutions may differ in the level of support they provide, there are elements of common ground because of the statutory requirements of the TTA and the ITT National Curriculum.

Diversity of entry requirements is recognised and for some courses the institution carries out a needs analysis of the students. All students are, however, subject to the requirements of Circular 4/98, in terms of interview procedure and criteria for selection. As stated in the introduction to this study, students are required to demonstrate competence in written and spoken standard English at interview. These criteria do not recognise the different backgrounds and experiences of students on entry or allow for a developmental model of learning, as advocated by Ivanic (1998), in which proficiency in these areas might develop as a result of being on the course. The debate about what constitutes spoken standard English is another contentious area, as already discussed in this chapter, and inappropriate application of this criterion to take account of accent may contravene equal opportunities policy.

In relation to the final award of QTS, all students must demonstrate that they have achieved the standards set out in Circular 4/98, which includes subject knowledge at Level 8 of the National Curriculum for English, Mathematics, Science and ICT. Because of the status of the standards in defining the mandatory gateway into the profession, Hextal and Mahoney (2000) chose to conduct an in-depth study of their development and the TTA's consultation exercise. They identify four main reasons for the introduction of the standards, the first of which is significant in terms of the present discussion about broadening access. It was because of the difficulty

of ensuring quality and consistency in a context where a variety of diverse routes into teaching had been established (Hextal and Mahoney 2000 p.325). In their analysis of the written consultation responses (1997), Hextal and Mahoney suggest that 80% ranged along a continuum of concerns. They provide two examples that they state reflect the type of reservations schools have on the impact of the standards on the nature of teaching and the account being given of what it is to be a professional. To summarise they are that 'the document ignores social and cultural context' and that it encourages a skills based practitioner, a technician rather than a 'developmental learning provider' (p.335).

One might argue that these examples reflect Hextal and Mahoney's construction of knowledge rather than an unbiased analysis of the responses and that other researchers might draw different conclusions. However, they do reflect the issues that are being discussed here, in the data analysis in Chapter 4 and in other sections of this literature review. Because of the prescriptive subject knowledge requirements of the standards, many institutions, including the ones in this study, set diagnostic audits to enable students to identify areas of weakness, so that students can work at addressing them during the course. Students often require tutorial support in these subject knowledge areas. However, cuts in funding have drastically reduced staffing levels in some institutions which puts a strain on learning support mechanisms, such as group and personal tutorials.

Restructuring of courses to provide flexibility through modularisation and semesterisation can also have an adverse effect. The students' learning experience can become fragmented. More time in schools and less taught hours can leave students feeling isolated and may affect those very students whom 'The Dearing Report' suggests we should be targeting.

To be recommended for QTS, students are required to demonstrate their subject knowledge through a series of exit audits. On-line Literacy tests were trialled in 1999 and came into force in the academic year 2000-2001. The content of the literacy tests is partly prescribed by what is easily tested and marked on-line and has been criticised in some educational forums for putting forward a prescriptive model of language, where answers are either

right or wrong. The anxiety generated by these tests and students' perceptions of their value are discussed in Chapter 4.

Funding for Teacher Training

A further complication is that the funding of teacher training is through the Teacher Training Agency and is dependent on high OFSTED grades in inspections. The TTA also allows institutions to bid for numbers for courses they are committed to running. Currently in my institution numbers have been allocated for a full-time PGCE, as the result of a good OFSTED. The B Ed has now run its final year, as a result of a poor OFSTED. This is significant in that the student body is very different on these courses. The post-graduate students have already been successful in HE. The B Ed students, on the other hand, comprise those for whom the government is arguably opening up HE.

There are also complex issues related to the recruitment process. The numbers the institutions are allowed to recruit are 'ring fenced', whereby institutions are allocated funds for offering places in shortage areas. Currently Primary ITT providers are being allocated funds for successfully recruiting men to work in 'Early Years', students from ethnic groups that are under represented and mathematics graduates. These places are notoriously difficult to fill. While the philosophy may accord with positive discrimination under an equal opportunity banner, the reality for many institutions may be a cut in funding that they can ill afford.

The current government funding arrangements also militate against B Ed courses. Because of a shortage of teachers, the government announced in 1999 that PGCE students would be paid 6000 pounds to train. Figures issued on the 20th July 2000, published on the web (www.educationlimited.co.uk), revealed that applications for postgraduate teacher training had increased by nearly 50% since that promise. However, separate figures issued at that time from the universities and colleges admissions services showed a 4.6% decline in applications for four-year undergraduate B Ed courses.

Summary of access issues

There appears to be a contradiction in government initiatives that encourage broaden access to ITT, through relaxing entry requirements and providing a range of provision on the one hand, and insisting on high levels of subject knowledge and funding students on post-graduate courses on the other.

Many institutions are being forced to abandon their commitment to widening participation. The admissions tutors cannot afford to take the risk of recruiting students whose background and prior learning may not fit the mould, because the resources are not there to provide additional support to help these students cope with the demands of the course. It would appear that the inequalities of the education system are being perpetuated rather than addressed.

The students chosen for my sample have benefited from the expansion of Higher Education and the more flexible view of entry criteria, which has enabled them to be admitted on to a teacher training programme via an access course or through special entry examinations, rather than through the traditional 'A' level route. They are now exposed to the periodic 'moral panic' (Cohen 1987) expressed in the media by 'traditionalists', who complain about the alleged lowering of degree standards, allied to an alleged lowering of the academic achievement and even ability of the Higher Education student intake (Wolfendale & Corbett 1996). To achieve QTS the students must now demonstrate that they have acquired a high level of subject knowledge, much of which will not have been covered in their previous education. The support that they might need may be compromised by lack of funding.

CONCLUSION

The aims of this chapter have been twofold: to examine through the literature the changing concept of standard English over the centuries and its status as the prestige variety to be taught and used in the education system of England at the turn of this century and the effect this may have on a particular group of teacher training students.

My conclusions are that a standard form of written English has emerged, characterised by the use of particular grammatical constructions and

vocabulary and conventions of spelling and punctuation, but that there are conflicting views about its status, which are related to a social and political agenda. Written standard English may vary in its degree of formality depending on register, but its very existence as the language of government, law and education and its widespread use dictate that it is a variety that most people in today's society need access to. I have argued that despite codification, linguistic features are subject to gradual change and that their acceptability is related to social nuances rather than linguistic considerations.

The differences between spoken and written language are problematic when endeavouring to define and implement a spoken standard. Any definition which excludes accent and its social nuances and issues of register is meaningless in practice, despite educational policy statements to the contrary. My understanding of the development of standard English as a prestige variety leads me to adopt a revisionist interpretation of the impetus for standardisation as defined by Cameron (1995), which I discussed earlier in this chapter in the subsection on 'The status of standard English'.

Consequently, I agree with those authors within the sociolinguistic field, who suggest that the promotion of spoken standard English within the education system is closely bound up with issues of national, class and personal identity and that insistence on its use disadvantages a large section of society.

It would appear that the status of standard English has been contested since its inception and is intertwined with notions of class and nationalist agendas. With the introduction of compulsory education, and more recently a National Curriculum, the relationship between language and power has been increasingly played out in the educational arena. The seeming contradictions identified in the government's promotion of standard English, and in particular spoken standard English, and their avowed concern with broadening access to teacher training were confirmed by my review of related sociolinguistic literature, research on access issues and government policy documentation.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I discuss some of the methodological issues surrounding qualitative and quantitative approaches to research and relate them to my own experience of collecting and presenting data in an educational context. I also consider my own influence as a researcher on the construction of knowledge.

The research process was affected by my personal circumstances as I moved to a new university one year into the research and decided for practical reasons to conduct the main study in this new setting. The other main development was that, since carrying out the research in Essex, the educational context had changed with Circular 10/97 being replaced by the statutory requirements of Circular 4/98. It was necessary to take account of the continuing changes in government policy on education.

Consequently this account of the research methods I have used will examine how my personal and professional agenda and changing government policy have influenced the procedures, as well as the theoretical justification for choosing particular research methods. I have provided a developmental account of the methods used within the project to show the relationship between the pilot study in Essex and the main study in London.

RESEARCH METHODS

Before justifying my choice of research methods, I will clarify the terminology. Basically, qualitative and quantitative methods are sets of different research techniques, each with their own potential advantages and limitations. Whilst quantitative techniques involve seeking larger scale patterns, quantifying or codifying, qualitative techniques are smaller scale and more open ended. For example, qualitative researchers may collect their data, using free response questions, informal semi-structured interviews, observations, diaries or life stories. The goal of qualitative research may be ‘to describe a specific group in fine detail and to explain the patterns that exist...not to discover general laws of human behaviour’ (Schofield 1993, p.92).

In order to decide on the most appropriate research methods, it was necessary to take account of the aims of the study and the resources that were available. This entailed considering the size of the sample, the time frame and my original research questions.

I was using a small sample of students who had entered teacher training via a non- traditional pathway to find out:

- What these students already knew about spoken and written English and how that knowledge had been acquired
- How they positioned themselves as speakers and writers in relations to notions of standard English
- What they now felt they needed to know to teach children in Primary School to communicate effectively in spoken and written English.

The data would be collected over the course of two years and comprise a pilot study and a main study.

I decided to use a mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods to collect data to inform these questions. As well as exploring students' personal life-stories and their perceptions of their ability through qualitative research methods, I wanted to examine features of their written and spoken English, which would require quantitative methods. I was interested in the relationship between confidence and competence. I wanted to compare their self-identified needs in the interviews with examples of their use of spoken and written standard English.

Qualitative research methods

Initially I decided that qualitative research methods were appropriate after reading that such methods are normally relativist in their perspective.

Johnson (1984) explains that relativist researchers are less confident of the existence of social facts. They have acquired their own view of the world but believe that people see things differently as a result of their own particular life experience. I felt that this was applicable to one of the aims of

my study, which was to ascertain the views of a group of students who have been and continue to be affected by the changes in educational policy.

The general characteristics of qualitative work, as discussed by Atkinson et al (1993) shape my study. The first characteristic that they refer to, an emphasis on exploring situations rather than testing pre-defined hypotheses, was built into the very conception of my project. I wanted to find out about the linguistic challenges facing non-traditionally qualified students. I had only tentative ideas about what those challenges might be. The second, a tendency to work with unstructured data, would be a feature of the semi-structured interviews I would conduct. The nature of these interviews is discussed in more detail later in this section. The third characteristic was demonstrated in my decision to investigate a small number of cases in detail and the fourth related to the way I intended to analyse the data. This was to take the form of verbal descriptions and explanations with only minimal quantification.

My initial reading about different research methods led me to explore the notion of objectivity. I was influenced by Eisner's (1993) belief 'that knowledge is always constructed to a framework, to a form of representation, to a cultural code, and to a personal biography' (p.54). My interest in such a pluralistic conception of knowledge made me consider my own role as researcher and influenced my subsequent interpretation of the data. I discuss this in my account of the research procedures later in this chapter and in my evaluation of the overall research methodology in Chapter 5.

At a practical level the particular approach within the qualitative methodological framework that I finally used was 'semi-structured interviewing' to explore aspects of students' life stories and to enable them to present their 'perspectives and strategies in their own terms' (Atkinson et al 1993, p.25).

Semi-structured interviews

Wood's criteria for what qualitative research entails, '[t]he qualitative researcher seeks to discover the meanings that participants attach to their

behaviour, how they interpret situations and what their perspectives are on particular issues' (Woods 1996, p.84), influenced the format of the interviews that I set up. I formulated a series of open-ended questions to use with all students. These are included as Appendix 3. I recognised that I might need to use different subsidiary questions in order to probe an individual student's response. Although there were particular areas I wished to explore with all students, I felt semi-structured individual interviews would be more useful than a focus group or questionnaire as the students' life experiences may have been very different. Personal interaction on a one to one basis would enable me to explore issues that might arise spontaneously from their responses. Again I was conscious of Eisner's (1993) statement: 'The facts never speak for themselves. They depend on the questions we ask' (p.54). My own role and my relationship with the students would be important for the success of the interviews. The degree of empathy that I would establish, through the recognition of a common background mediated through language would undoubtedly affect the data, not only in terms of eliciting students' responses, but also in the language that they might use. For example, I would need to be aware that empathy might result in their speech mirroring mine, when I came to analyse the linguistic characteristics of their spoken language.

I had carried out a group interview in a previous research project for my M.A., with women interviewees from a similar educational background. I knew that those women also shared a common cultural background and knew each other, enabling what Tannen (1992) terms 'rapport talk' to occur. By this I mean that they were able to identify with each other's experience and share similar memories and that this might provide more information than if they had been interviewed singly. However, in my current research, I felt the disadvantages of group interviews would apply. These are the tendency for discussion to revolve around consensus and for dissenting views to be muffled; that some individuals might dominate and others contribute less and the possibility that individuals might influence one another and that views may not be the same as if they were sharing them one to one. I was aware from the teaching context that, if a dominant personality voices a grievance, then others in the group often agree.

My decision to explore aspects of the students' life stories through semi-structured interviews also took into account the advantages of using life stories, as set out by Purvis (1987). I was particularly interested in the life story as a result of the interaction between the storyteller and the researcher. The oral accounts of the students' experiences could provide information that they may not have seen as important. (Please refer to Appendix 4 for details of the advantages of life stories as identified by Purvis 1987.) I also took into account the disadvantages, such as the framework of questions distorting the importance of certain events, errors, bias or failure of memory on the part of the respondents. My description and analysis of the findings endeavour to recognise the limitations of the data. This issue is fully discussed in Chapter 5, when I critically evaluate the methods used in both studies.

Additionally I became aware as the project progressed that '[ideas] from autobiography and narrativity can be used to discuss the process of producing categories such as class and the elusive nature of such productions' (Temple 1997, p.80). I also became increasingly interested in 'the alternative voices who can challenge aspects of the status quo' (Maguire 1997; Ivanic 1998), as I discuss in Chapter 2, in the section on Personal Identity, and Chapter 4 where I present and analyse the interview data. This interest in the personal voice informed my decision to include liberal amounts of transcript. I was influenced by feminist researchers such as Okley (1981) and Maguire (1997), who used qualitative research methods to study girls and women and were 'concerned to allow their respondents to speak for themselves' (Atkinson et al 1993). My students' accounts of their early language experiences (Handel's retrospective self, as cited in Ivanic 1998) provided an insight into the people they had become (the present self) and were important when considering their potential as language users and teachers (desired and prospective selves).

Quantitative research methods

As well as using qualitative research methods to ascertain students' views and discover how confident they felt in their use of standard English, I decided to draw on quantitative research methods to examine students'

competence in using spoken and written standard English. I wanted to move beyond personal life stories and students' perceptions of their ability and examine features of their written and spoken English. By collecting examples of their spoken and written English, I could record numerically their use of non-standard forms to see whether any patterns emerged. I was interested in the relationship between confidence and competence. As mentioned later in this chapter, where I discuss how the pilot study informed the main study, I also collected data on the London students' explicit knowledge of grammar, spelling and punctuation from the diagnostic and exit audits they took.

As Gomm (1996) points out the term 'quantitative research' is subject to different definitions. It refers to 'the search for causal relationships conceptualised in terms of the interaction of 'variables', 'the design and use of standardised research instruments to collect numerical data' and 'the manipulation of data using statistical techniques' (Gomm 1996, p.123). The research methods in my own small-scale study seem to have only a tenuous connection with these procedures. I am using the term quantitative data to refer to the identification of patterns that have been recorded numerically, even though the numbers are small and generalisations cannot be made.

I decided to use a table format to record examples of students' errors and use of non-standard forms in their written English, using the categories from the QCA's Technical Accuracy Project (1999), to see whether patterns emerged. I devised a similar format to record examples of spoken non-standard English. I intended to analyse the data quantitatively in the broadest sense in relation to other large-scale statistical analysis of non-standard usage, thus confirming or providing exceptions to a pattern. The errors and non-standard usage would also be analysed qualitatively to provide an individual picture of a student's competence in their use of language and to compare this to their perceptions of their ability.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE RESEARCH PROCEDURES

In this section I explain in more detail how the pilot study informed the main study, both in terms of the range and focus of the data and in the methods used to analyse it. I explain how I revisited the data from the pilot

study to carry out a closer analysis in the light of the new knowledge and understanding that I had acquired while conducting the main study. I show how the process was circular rather than linear. I therefore include in the account some evaluation of the research methods I used. A more detailed evaluation of the appropriateness of the methods is included in Chapter 5.

The pilot study, carried out in the Teacher Training Institution in Essex where I was an English lecturer, was designed to inform the development of a main research proposal, which was to explore the confidence and competence of students from non-traditional pathways in their use of spoken and written standard English. The objectives of this pilot study were to trial some of the research methods, which would form a major part of the main research proposal, examine in its own right the small amount of data collected and use the experience to inform the main study. In the main study I would develop and refine the qualitative and quantitative research methods I had tried out and present and analyse the data.

Methodological issues

The issues which I explore apply to *both studies* and many of the comments are applicable to *both reports*. I have indicated where there are developments or differences.

The Self as researcher

I took Okely's example of confronting the notion of objectivity in research by starting with the subjective, working from the self outwards (Okely 1987), based on Pocock's assertion that it is necessary to explore one's personal anthropology and its consequences in order to be able to perceive others (Pocock 1975). I therefore decided to reflect on my own experience of being taught and teaching language and make notes on what I considered important in order to devise questions for semi-structured interviews with the students. (Please refer to Appendix 3.)

I hoped that reflecting upon my own personal experience would increase my 'theoretical sensitivity' (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Maguire (1997) cites Temple (1997), who states that 'we all build narrative accounts of our lives in which we portray ourselves for an audience' (Temple 1997, p.78). I

recognised that 'in a conceptual sense' there would be similarities as well as differences and that I must be careful not to assume that everyone else's experiences had been similar (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

When I put myself into the interviews, often to put the interviewee at ease, it was also indicative of the interview being, 'a process of constructing reality to which both parties contribute and by which both are affected' (Woods 1996, p.91). I was working on the assumption that 'when people do not share frameworks, there is no common ground; they cannot understand each other' (Eisner 1993, p.54).

My professional experience of teaching English on the B Ed in the two institutions was, I recognised, another source of sensitivity. I could draw upon my own subject knowledge and knowledge about the students. However, I was aware through studying the literature on research methods that, as an 'insider', working within the institution, I also needed to devise ways of opening up my thinking about the data that I was to collect and move from descriptive to theoretical levels of analysis (Strauss & Corbin 1990).

The *main development* that I became aware of in reflecting on the notion of objectivity towards the end of the pilot study was that, although I had considered my personal life history and acknowledged my own bias, I had not accounted for the views of the person I was to become during the course of the research. This was confirmed by my later reading on the changing nature of identity, as explored in my literature search using the work of Ivanic (1998), and through the examination of the data on students' reflections on their different 'selves'. I realised that I too had become a different person from the original researcher who had started out on the doctorate programme. The more I became immersed in the sociolinguistic literature the more political I felt. I was increasingly questioning the rationale behind government initiatives on the subject knowledge required by the students and ways to assess it and the requirements for spoken standard English in the ITT Curriculum. I was aware that my interpretation of the data, despite my intention to describe the students' current

perceptions, would be influenced by what I was bringing to it and that my 'current self' was an increasingly politicised 'researcher'.

After a long time spent wrestling with the notion of objectivity, I was reassured by Eisner's (1993) summary in his chapter on 'Objectivity in educational research', where he states that:

'Recognising and accepting the inevitable transaction between self and world seems to me [more] realistic and [more] useful. This recognition would underscore the constructed, tentative, and framework dependent character of perception and knowledge. It would contribute to a more pluralistic conception of knowledge, one more dynamic and less dogmatic, one with a human face' (p.55).

This notion of dynamism as a positive construct underpins my views on the nature of knowledge making.

Identifying the Student

I capitalised on my role as 'insider' in order to identify the students for my research. The general issue that I wish to mention here is the decision to interview women students. The first was a practical consideration. Many of the students on the course in Essex were mature women students who had gained a place on the B Ed via an access course. The second consideration was related to a methodological issue. By choosing to interview women, I felt there would be areas of common experience and that my gender as well as my background would facilitate an openness that may have been more difficult to achieve with men. Oakley (1981) explores these issues in her paper 'Interviewing Women: a contradiction in terms'. It seems to me that there are grounds for expecting that where a woman researcher is interviewing other women this is a situation with special characteristics conducive to the easy flow of information.

'Women's language of experience is often distinctly personal, but the general implications are always there to

be found. We must therefore explore the abstractions contained in our anecdotes' (Okely 1987, p.102).

I felt that the rapport that I established with the students in the pilot study did reflect these gender issues and I decided to keep this criterion when selecting interviewees for the main study.

A major difference in the main study group was the range of interviewees. Although all women, the age range was much wider and there were representatives from different ethnic backgrounds. This resulted in new issues and emphases arising, especially with regard to accent, dialect, the status of standard English and role models. I have provided details of how I operated the selection criteria in both institutions in the section below.

Choosing my sample for the Pilot Study in Essex

At the end of a teaching session with the Year 2 students, I mentioned that I was carrying out some research on the teaching of English and would like to interview some students who had entered university via a non-traditional pathway (as defined in the introduction). I briefly shared my own personal history (refer to Chapter 1) and explained that the purpose of my research was to give them a voice. I tried to dispel any fears that the findings would reflect on their suitability for teaching or affect their degree prospects. I took the names of those who expressed interest and said I would contact them. I then chose my sample by cross-referencing the names to a list of the year group's qualifications on entry. I realised I was using an 'opportunity sample', because I was using students who had volunteered. Issues of bias and the limitation of claims that can be made (Woods 1996 p.92) are discussed in Chapter 5 where I critically analyse my methods.

Because I wanted to examine the particular language needs of students who were not traditionally qualified, I chose to focus on four mature women students who had left school between 15 and 20 years ago without the qualifications to enable them to embark on a teacher-training programme. Although the four students had entered teacher training via an access course, their profiles were very varied. Contextual information on the students' backgrounds is provided at the beginning of Chapter 4 in figure 4.1. The

data was collected in the first semester of their second year on a three-year B Ed.

Choosing My Sample For The Main Study In London

The focus of the main study was the same as that of the pilot study. However, there were two significant developments.

As explained in Chapter 1, a major development, which affected the research, is that I left the institution in Essex where I was working to lecture on a B Ed in a London based university which serves a diverse ethnic community. I decided to continue to explore the issues identified for the pilot study in this different institutional context.

Many of the students on the B Ed in the London university are from an Afro-Caribbean background; other students are from the local white working class community. Both groups will provide positive role models for the pupils in London schools where they are likely to teach. Like the students in Essex, many are from non-traditional pathways and experience the prejudice/stereotyping in relation to both educational under-achievement and use of non-standard English, which surround Afro-Caribbean, inner city working class and 'Essex girls'. I chose to focus on students who were not traditionally qualified to maintain consistency with the pilot study.

The research I undertook in Essex had dispelled my assumptions that those students, who embarked on teacher training via a non-traditional pathway, would share similar educational and social backgrounds and display similar non-standard features in their spoken and written English. With hindsight I recognised my own bias had contravened the equal opportunities policies I endorse in my professional life.

I decided, however, to use the same criteria, lack of academic achievement on leaving school, to select my sample of students to ensure consistency, as I wished to discuss the findings from both institutions. Also I was aware that this university had been committed to broadening access to higher education as a result of their equal opportunities policy. Consequently they attracted students who lived locally, many of whom were from communities that used a non-standard dialect. Moreover, a high proportion of these 'non-

traditional' entrants were mature students and their varied experiences since leaving school would provide interesting data on the effect of continuing life experiences on language use, an area that I had become particularly interested in during the pilot study.

At the beginning of the academic year I explained my research interest to the final year B Ed students and asked for volunteers to be interviewed. The only criterion I gave was that they should have entered Higher Education through a non-conventional route. The decision to use students from the 3rd year was because the university's allocation of student numbers was being transferred to the PGCE and there were no 2nd year students. I was again using an 'opportunity sample' (Woods 1996). I recognise that the stage the students were at on the course and the imminent closure of the B Ed may have affected their confidence and competence and I acknowledge this in Chapter 5.

Only ten volunteers came forward, so I decided to use them all. They were, in fact, all women, although they represented a wide range of ages and were from a range of backgrounds and cultures. Contextual information on these students is provided at the beginning of Chapter 4, figure 4.2.

Although there were many more women on the B Ed course than there were men, it is still perhaps significant that it was women who volunteered. Women may feel more comfortable than men in sharing their life stories or they may have responded to me as a female lecturer and researcher. Whatever the reasons, it meant that I was not dealing with a gender variable. I did not have to consider the controversial issues surrounding the differences between men and women's communication skills (e.g. Cameron 2000; Tannen 1992). For anonymity and to avoid confusion with the pilot group, I identified them as Students 1 to 10, rather than using the initial letter of their name. The data was collected over the course of the final year of the B Ed course.

Ethical Issues, Negotiating permission, Confidentiality

One of the difficulties that I anticipated in the pilot study was gaining the goodwill of the management hierarchy of the institution, who may have felt

that highlighting the difficulties some students have with standard English would be seen as reflecting adversely on the institution's admissions procedure. My fears were totally unfounded. In an informal interview with the Head of Education, I outlined my research proposal and guaranteed confidentiality, both in respect of the name of the institution and the individual students. The response was one of interest, an acknowledgement that the problem is one encountered by many institutions and confirmation that I was not breaching any code of professional conduct. The main concern was that I had sufficient knowledge and understanding of data analysis to do justice to the material collected. The same procedure was carried out in the second institution and a similar response occurred. The senior management already knew about my research interest, as this had been discussed at my interview for the new job. The fact that I had already undertaken some research and was over half way through the doctorate was instrumental in gaining their confidence and permission.

The next step was to contact the identified students to see if they would agree to an interview. In each instance I explained that the focus of the research was to give them a voice, briefly shared my own personal history and dispelled any fears that the findings would reflect on their suitability for teaching or affect their degree prospects. The reaction of both sets of students, once confidentiality had been assured, was a sense of importance that they had been chosen to participate.

Practical issues and experience of semi-structured interviews

In both the studies I conducted the interviews at a time and place convenient for the individual student. I felt it was important to provide a relaxed atmosphere free from interruptions. I used a dictaphone, but also, with the students' permission, made notes as I went along. I used supplementary questions such as, 'So what was that like?' 'Can you pinpoint why?' to probe further or clarify answers. Having the tape already set up minimised its presence and neither the presence of the machine or the note taking seemed to inhibit the responses.

The notes assisted the transcription of the tapes, which were transcribed in full in accordance with the grounded theory method of analysis, as

explained by Strauss and Corbin (1990). They state that the very first interviews should be entirely transcribed and analysed before going on to the next interviews. This early coding guided the analysis of the subsequent interviews. A detailed account of the process and its development in the two studies is provided in the next section, where I discuss the analysis of the qualitative data. Relistening to the tapes was invaluable as hesitations, deliberations, emphases were evident in a way that note-taking and subsequent transcription did not reveal.

I established a rapport with the students quite quickly. This was helped by general conversation before the interviews began, as I explained the procedure and the reason for taking notes as well as taping. I felt this was valuable as both sets of interviews were productive from the beginning. I found the chronological structure of the question sequence and my own self-reflections invaluable in enabling me to devise supplementary questions to probe areas I wanted to explore.

The structure of the interviews changed within the pilot study and between the two studies, as I took the opportunity to reflect and refine my technique. There was progressive focusing, 'whereby other sorts of data were no longer being collected' (Ball 1993, p.41), as I began to probe more deeply on language issues. However, this meant that the questions in the two studies were somewhat different (refer to Appendix 3) and, as the supplementary questions were part of a dialogue, 'not just a device for gathering information' (Woods 1996, p.91), it was sometimes difficult to identify clear patterns in the scripts. The most significant changes relate to the students being asked to explicitly define what they understand by the terms 'spoken standard English' and 'written standard English' at the beginning of the interview to provide a basis for a more informed discussion about the controversial issues embedded in these terms.

Although the interviews in the pilot study were generally less focused on language issues there were interesting, unexpected issues to emerge, such as the perceptions about accent that I continued to explore in greater depth in the main study. The different institutional context and changing political context also resulted in slightly different concerns, but there were still

interesting points of comparison, as I illustrate in the analysis of the data in Chapter 4.

Analysing and processing of interview data on students' perspectives

This was an important experience within the pilot study in that it gave me the opportunity to engage in the process of analysing interview transcripts, guided by relevant literature, as well as the opportunity to interpret the findings in their own right and consider the implications for the main research proposal. It was the area I found most problematic but most enlightening. From my reading on qualitative research methodology and attendance at an Open University Saturday school, I had become interested in grounded theorising, a new concept to me and one which I hoped might move me on from purely descriptive analysis. Throughout this study I was faced with a dilemma. I was interested in a research approach influenced by feminism which would allow 'respondents to speak for themselves' and yet I wanted to impose some order in my presentation of the data. I tried to reconcile the approaches, which I do not believe are mutually exclusive, by ensuring that close analysis of the data resulted in a balance between 'verification, exploration and formulation' (Woods 1996, p.111).

I began by immersing myself in the data over a period of several weeks, both listening to the tapes and reading the transcriptions. I worked on one interview in the first instance, highlighting any points that I considered to be of interest, occasionally annotating the script (Appendix 5). After working in this way on the four scripts, I found that additionally I was engaging in a process of comparison and that, although some patterns were beginning to emerge, there were also gaps, as a result of the changing interview structure. I made a distinction between spoken and written standard English and identified two major headings, 'Confidence' and 'Attitude'. These were particularly related to my second research question. I was exploring how these students positioned themselves as speakers and writers in relation to notions of spoken and written standard English and their ability to teach it. Embedded within this was their perception of the status of standard English. I was, however, able to identify some general themes in relation to these headings such as the influences of home, school and work. 'The first step is

to identify the major categories, which, in turn, may fall into groups. The data can then be marshalled behind these' (Woods 1996, p.106).

It was difficult to list specific examples from the transcripts under the identified themes, as they often fitted under several. This concerned me at first but, as I continued to sort and classify and progressively focus on issues related to confidence, I realised that many of the themes were obviously connected. To understand why these students lacked or had lacked confidence, one needed to explore a range of causes, which were often inter-related. Consequently the effect of schooling, home background and work experience were discussed, as they were important influences on students' own confidence and competence as well as affecting their attitudes to the importance of spoken and written standard English and its role in the curriculum.

When I came to analyse the data from the main study, I used the experience that I had gained from the pilot study. I worked in a similar way immersing myself in the data through repeatedly listening to the tapes and rereading the transcripts (refer to Appendix 5). I used the heading 'Confidence and Perceptions', which I felt described more accurately the students' voices. As a result of progressive focusing on language issues, I explored in more detail emerging themes, such as the status of standard English. The more focused interview structure in the main study also enabled me to explore in more detail students' knowledge about standard English. Even at this stage of the analysis, there were still considerable areas of overlap. This time, instead of making copious notes in the margins as I had in the pilot study, I noted comments under various headings and sub-headings and made a note of relevant literature to refer to. At first I just mentioned authors, preferring to choose the most appropriate references at a later stage. However, on rereading material on the generation of theory I realised that

'[c]onsulting the literature is an integral part of theory development. It helps to stimulate ideas and to give shape to the emerging theory, thus providing commentary on, and a stimulus to study' (Woods 1996, p.110).

A major problem, and one I had encountered in the pilot study was how to present data that fits into a range of categories and almost resists definition. I was therefore reassured to read a criticism by Brown (1973) of the work of Glaser and Strauss on grounded theory that acknowledges that 'some phenomena involve much greater discontinuity in either time or space or in the level of the systems studied' (Brown 1973, p.6). I eventually used a 'best fit' approach and provided 'detailed ethnographic description' (Woods 1996, p.111).

Although I attempted to ensure that the categories were grounded in the data, I was increasingly aware from my reading that they were the product of 'the interface between the researcher and the researched' (Ball S.J 1993, p.45), and that just as the personality of the interviewee was a factor to consider, a different researcher might have produced different findings or given different emphases.

In writing up the final analysis for this thesis I revisited both sets of interview data and decided to write up the data from the pilot study under the same headings that I had used in the main study. Whilst acknowledging that some interviews provided more information on particular issues than others did, I hoped to provide explicit information on the significant themes that had emerged as the research progressed. I decided to use liberal amounts of transcription to allow the individual voices of students to come through.

Another consideration that influenced my decision to incorporate 'raw' data, in the form of students' actual language, was that the students' perceptions of themselves as speakers in relation to notions of standard English could then be examined by the reader against their language use. The examples of the non-standard features they use, which were discussed in response to the first research question about competence, do not illustrate the positive features of some of the students' spoken language. I wanted their language to speak for itself to inform the discussion on the relative merits of standard and non-standard varieties for teachers and pupils. To enable the reader to know whether the views cited are individual examples or reflect a

commonly held view, I have provided numbers rather than using terms such as ‘several’ or ‘the majority.’

Conventions for presenting extracts from interviews

I have followed two of the conventions used by Ivanic in her interview transcriptions:

‘Extracts from the interviews are in the same typeface as the text, as they are not just colourful illustrations of the argument, but should be read as contributions to the content of the chapter. (Ivanic 1998 p.120).’

‘I have attempted to make the parts quoted as relevant and easy to read as possible. I have therefore not transcribed hesitations or false starts, unless they seem to contribute to the meaning. Where conventional punctuation (commas, question marks) will make the quotation easier to follow I have used them. (Ivanic 1998 p.121).’

I decided not to indent the numerous extracts from the interviews as they were frequently short and were easier to read when embedded in the text.

Numerical data

As mentioned previously I had decided to collect examples of students’ written English in the pilot study to assess their competence in written standard English and record them numerically to see whether any patterns emerged and how these might relate to other statistics. This had included a hand written extract and word-processed assignments. The latter provided me with limited evidence, as I had not thought about the impact of a grammar and spell check being used. In the main study I also collected hand-written and word-processed work, but this time, informed by the pilot study, I was aware that because of the use of I T tools, they would provide different evidence, which might usefully be compared.

Another important procedural development, relating to quantitative data collection was the effect of the changing political and educational context.

Students at the time of the London study were required to demonstrate explicit knowledge of grammar, spelling and punctuation in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status. The competences required by Circular 10/97 had already caused anxiety for the Essex students. The standards set out in Circular 4/98 and the knowledge required to implement The National Literacy Strategy exacerbated the situation for the London students. I therefore decided in the main study to collect additional written data in these areas. The university was using exit audits to assess students' competence in and knowledge of written standard English. I used the results of the exit audits as data and compared my sample group's ability to write in standard English in their assignments with their explicit knowledge of grammar, spelling and punctuation as demonstrated in their audits to provide information on two of my research questions: What did they already know about standard English and what did they need to know to teach children to communicate effectively in written English. An example of the exit audit is included as Appendix 6.

The numerical data were set out in table formats for ease of reference and to provide an accessible overview. In the pilot study I originally recorded the number and types of 'errors' that the students had made in their written work. As a result of further reading of related literature, I undertook a more detailed analysis of the written data in the main study. Using the QCA Technical Accuracy Project Framework, I listed the actual 'errors', in an attempt to provide a more detailed picture of individual students' use of non-standard features within the individual scripts and how these compared to their knowledge of such features in the audits. I later decided to revisit the data from the pilot and do a similar analysis to reveal the types of non-standard usage. The appropriateness of the QCA framework is discussed in Chapter 5, where the methods used in both studies are critically evaluated.

I also analysed the taped interviews from both studies for examples of non-standard English and set them out in a similar format to the written data. This was more problematic because of the difficulties of defining spoken standard English, as discussed in the literature review. Again I report on this in Chapter 5.

In my final presentation of the linguistic features of the students' spoken language, I revisited the data from pilot study and the main study to probe in greater depth the words, phrases and grammatical constructions in relation to issues about context and register that were identified in the literature review.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE PILOT STUDY AND THE MAIN STUDY

In the following section I provide an account of the procedures used to collect the data in the two institutions and explain the decisions to increase the range of data and to adapt the techniques for collection. I have listed the range of data collected for each institution in two columns next to each other (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2), so that it is easy to see where the methods and content are the same and where there are differences.

Notes for Figure 3.1 Methods of data collection

I have sub-divided *standard English* into two separate headings, *Spoken standard English* and *Written standard English*. The decision to separate spoken and written standard English was influenced by the discussion in Chapter 2 of the differences between them with particular reference to Perera (1995); Ivanic (1998). These headings have been further sub-divided into *Competence* and *Confidence and Perceptions*, which relate to the main questions underpinning the research focus, as set out in Chapter 1, and the research methods used to collect the data. The same data often yields both **quantitative** and **qualitative** information.

The data collected for each of the Essex students consisted of 1 informal interview, 1 piece of hand-written work, two word-processed assignments. The data collected for each of the London students (with the exception of two students who provided an interview only) consisted of 1 informal interview, 1 piece of hand-written work, 1 word-processed assignment and 1 exit audit. I have listed the methods of data collection and the type of information it provides under these headings for ease of reference. The data I have collected in both studies relate to the main research areas: 'Standard English', and 'Access Issues'.

FIGURE 3.1 METHODS OF DATA COLLECTION IN RELATION TO STANDARD ENGLISH

<p><u>Data Collection in Essex (Pilot Study)</u></p> <p><u>Spoken standard English</u></p> <p><i>Competence</i></p> <p>1 informal taped interview – to provide quantitative data on students’ use of non-standard grammar and vocabulary in a semi-formal context.</p> <p><i>Confidence and Perceptions</i></p> <p>Same informal interview – to provide qualitative data on students’ <i>attitudes</i> to spoken standard English; their experience and knowledge of spoken standard English and their confidence in their ability to teach it.</p> <p><u>Written standard English</u></p> <p><i>Competence</i></p> <p>No exit audit.</p>	<p><u>Data Collection in London (Main Study)</u></p> <p><u>Spoken standard English</u></p> <p><i>Competence</i></p> <p>1 informal taped interview – to provide the same information as listed under the Essex data.</p> <p><i>Confidence and Perceptions</i></p> <p>Same informal interview – as in Essex but also includes students’ <i>definitions</i> of spoken standard English.</p> <p><u>Written standard English</u></p> <p><i>Competence</i></p> <p>Exit audit for the same students at the end of the third year – to provide quantitative data on their explicit knowledge of the grammar, spelling and punctuation of written standard English and wider knowledge about language.</p>
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<p>1-2 hand-written pages, completed at the beginning of an English session, in which students identify their own language needs - to provide quantitative data on students' competence in using the grammar, spelling and punctuation of written standard English.</p>	<p>Hand written extracts within the exit audit demonstrating the use of stylistic features of two different genres – to provide quantitative data on students' competence in using the grammar, spelling and punctuation of written standard English and an appropriate stylistic register.</p>
<p>Two word-processed assignments (1000 words each), part of a module on <i>Understanding Language</i> – to provide quantitative data on students' competence in using the grammar, spelling and vocabulary of written standard English that is required to fulfil the university's pass criteria for an academic assignment. The effect of I T, given the use of spell and grammar checks in many word-processing packages on the use of standard English is discussed in the analysis of the data.</p>	<p>Word-processed assignment (1000 words), part of a module on <i>Reading</i> – to provide the same information as listed under the Essex data.</p>
<p><i>Confidence and Perceptions</i></p> <p>1-2 hand-written pages as cited above – to provide qualitative data on students' perceived needs in relation to standard English and their competence to teach it.</p>	<p><i>Confidence and Perceptions</i></p> <p>Not applicable.</p>

<p>Same informal taped interview as cited above – to provide qualitative data on students’ conceptions of and attitudes to written standard English; their perceptions of their implicit and explicit knowledge of the grammar, spelling and punctuation of written standard English and their competence in using them and teaching them; and how that knowledge has been acquired.</p>	<p>Informal taped interview – to provide the same information as listed under the Essex data.</p>
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Notes on fig 3.2 Contextual Information and data collected in relation to access issues

Interviews provide information on the students’ individual life experiences, including work experience.

FIGURE 3.2 CONTEXTUAL INFORMATION AND DATA RELATED TO ACCESS ISSUES

<p><u>Access Issues</u></p> <p>Contextual information from records includes students’ date of birth, educational qualifications, and teacher training programme.</p> <p>Taped Interviews -to provide supplementary information on individual life stories.</p>	<p><u>Access Issues</u></p> <p>As in Essex</p> <p>As in Essex</p>
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Summary of the differences between the two studies in terms of data collected

As Figures 3.1 and 3.2 demonstrate, the data collected in the Essex and London studies are similar, as the purpose of both was to collect evidence about confidence and competence in standard English and explore the relationship between them. However, there are differences, which reflect the changing political and educational context with Circular 4/98 replacing Circular 10/97 and the NLS replacing the NLP. Some changes are the result of the experience gained from the first study informing the main study; other changes are the result of practical constraints, because the data was collected at different times in different institutions. The main differences in terms of data collected are the inclusion of information gleaned from audits in the main study; the more focused interview questions in the main study; the different context and content of the hand-written extracts and the different titles of the academic assignments.

CONCLUSION

A mixture of qualitative and quantitative research methods enabled me to explore my main research questions which were concerned with the linguistic features of standard English and its social and political functions. There were limitations to the aspect of The Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999) that I used as a research tool to analyse the students' use of non-standard grammar, as the element I used was based on a deficit model of language. Students' reflections on their own writing and reasons for their linguistic choices, as collected by Ivanic (1998), were needed to supplement the data and provide insights into the complexity of language use.

Semi-structured interviews were an appropriate tool to probe students' perspectives on the social and political aspects of standard English that I was exploring. The dilemma of finding patterns in the interview data, whilst allowing the individual voices to come through, was partly resolved by using liberal amounts of transcription. The complex notion of objectivity and the construction of knowledge was addressed by accepting Eisner's (1993) pluralistic conception of knowledge which recognises it as a dynamic construct.

Further critical analysis of the methods that I used is included in Chapter 5 where I revisit key issues underpinning this research and discuss their *implications for educational policy and practice*.

CHAPTER 4 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH

INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of this chapter I provide contextual information on the backgrounds of the students who are the subjects of this research and on the institutions at which they are studying. I discuss how this information adds to the data from the interviews and consider any implications for the access issues which underpin this thesis. In the rest of the chapter I present and frame my analysis of the data that I have collected around the first two main research questions: **What do these students know about spoken/written standard English?** and **How do students position themselves in relation to notions of spoken and written standard English?**

The data collected in response to the first question is intended to provide information about students' implicit and explicit knowledge of standard English, working within a definition of standard English that focuses on concrete linguistic features. The data that was collected in an attempt to address the second main research question was related to the definitions of standard English that emphasise its social and political functions.

The responses to the third question: **What do students feel they need to know to teach standard English effectively?** relate to the linguistic and social aspects of standard English are embedded within the answers to the first two questions.

To avoid repetition, wherever possible I present the data that I have collected from both institutions concurrently. I draw out any significant similarities and differences in the data and relate these to issues of methodology, the changing political and educational context, other research and relevant reading from the literature search. The relationship between competence, confidence and perceived needs is discussed in the conclusion to this chapter and in Chapter 5.

For ease of reference and to provide an accessible overview, I set out the quantitative data on students' competence in spoken and written standard English in a series of tables with accompanying notes. When read in

conjunction, they should provide evidence of both the range and frequency of non-standard features, which can be compared with other data, for example, the most common non-standard features of spoken English as listed in the NC 1999 and as recorded in The Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999) which considered non-standard features in pupils’ writing at GCSE.

The qualitative data from interviews on students’ confidence in using and attitudes towards spoken and written standard English and how these have been acquired are written up using liberal amounts of transcription to enable individual voices to come through and to reveal the complexity of interpreting the data. A full discussion on methodological issues surrounding the presentation and analysis of the data is provided in Chapters 3 and 5.

Contextual information

The contextual details on students’ backgrounds and the courses for which they have enrolled are set out in figures 4.1 and 4.2, with accompanying notes. I include students’ date of birth, educational qualifications and work experience. Date of birth has been included as it informs the data in several ways; it indicates when the students went to school and their age when they embarked on teacher training.

Please refer to Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below.

FIGURE 4.1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS – ESSEX SAMPLE

Student	D.O.B.	O Level / GCSE / CSE results (Age taken unknown)*	Post-16 Qualifications*	Previous jobs	Training Programme
A	1970	2 O Levels (or equivalent)	Access Course	Telesales, Accounts work	3 yr. B Ed
D	1964	2 O Levels (or equivalent)	NNEB Certificate, Access Course	Nursery nurse	3 yr. B Ed
R	1963	4 O Levels (or equivalent)	BTEC ONC Business Studies, Access Course	Banking (entailed travelling round the country)	3 yr. B Ed
X	1969	5 O Levels (or equivalent)	2 A Levels, Access Course	Factory work, Telesales - “analytical company”	3 yr. B Ed

**FIGURE 4.2 BACKGROUND INFORMATION AND
EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATIONS – LONDON SAMPLE**

Student	D.O.B.	O Level/ GCSE results at 16	Post-16 Qualifications	Previous jobs	Training Programme
1	1962	Grade 1 CSEs	5 GCSEs Exceptional Entry Examination	Casual work, Mother	5 year mixed mode
2	1960	None	1 GCSE English BTEC Diploma in Child Psychology (94/95) Exceptional Entry Examination	Office work (solicitors), mother, parent helper	3 yr. B Ed
3	1963	3 CSEs	Access Course 1994	Casual work, Mother	3 yr. B Ed
4	1971	None	2 GCSEs 1 A Level Exceptional Entry Examination	Singing and performing, Mother	3 yr. B Ed
5	1959	O levels taken in Uganda	Diploma in Education Grade V Teacher in Uganda teaching Fine Art and Geography	Teaching, Mother	2 yr. full-time
6	1973	7 GCSEs	Access Course 1996	Office work, receptionist sales (Virgin Megastore)	3 yr. B Ed
7	1964	None	Access to teaching course 1996	Manual work, Manager (Thompson Local Directory), Mother	3 yr. B Ed
8	1968	3 O Levels	2 GCSEs Exceptional Entry Examination	Sales (fashion company), Mother	4 yr. mixed mode
9	1959	1 O Level	NNEB 1986 Exceptional Entry Examination	Computing , nursery helper, mother	3 yr. B Ed
10	1971	4 GCSEs (including English Language and Literature — assessment on coursework due to illness)	Qualified nurse	Nursing	3 yr. B Ed

Notes on figures 4.1 and 4.2

Information was not collected on the dates when the qualifications of the Essex Students were obtained. The pattern of continuing education was discussed in the interviews, but dates would have supplemented this information. With hindsight this was an omission in this pilot study, which informed the collection of data for the main study.

One of the differences between the two groups was that, whereas in the Essex sample all four students had entered teacher training via an access course, in the London sample this applied to only three. Of the others, five had sat 'an exceptional entry examination', the equivalence of 'A' level, in English and Mathematics. This examination had been produced by the university to assist recruitment of students who did not have the required 'A' levels to embark on a B Ed programme. Of the remaining two students, one had qualified as a nurse and the other had a Diploma in Education from Uganda and had taught there for eight years.

A further distinction was that, whereas the Essex university only ran a full-time B Ed, the London university had provided different routes to enable students to gain their B Ed. as part of their commitment to equal opportunities and broadening access. Consequently, one student was enrolled on a five year mixed mode course, of which two years were full-time and three part-time, another was on a four year mixed mode course and one student was enrolled on a two-year full-time programme, because of qualifications gained abroad. The rest were on a full-time three year B Ed.

All the Essex students were in the second year of their course when the data was collected. All the London students were in the final year of their course when the research was conducted.

Access Issues

Two issues arose from the contextual information that I collected on students' backgrounds and the institutions where the research was undertaken. The first point is related to the composition of the group who were the focus of my research; the second is that of the training institutions' access policies.

Composition of group

My hypothesis that students entering Teacher Training from non-traditional pathways have similar backgrounds and needs was misguided. I had unintentionally conflated class, educational underachievement and non-standard speech. My own working class background and experience were the main reasons behind this misconception. Failure to take 'A' levels at 18 and enter Higher Education is not in itself indicative of class background, lack of academic ability or even lack of motivation, although the small number of GCEs suggests a lack of academic ability/interest at that point.

Interview data provided more information on the range of backgrounds the students came from and their various reasons for leaving school. Some students fitted my preconceptions. D could not wait to leave, '16 - out the door. I wouldn't say they were the best days of my life.' Leaving school at sixteen was for most students their own decision, but it was in some cases a decision made by their family (Int. 2 and 3). Student 2 reported that education was not valued by her family and that she had to start a job after her 'mocks'. Student 3's disrupted education resulted in her only taking CSEs and leaving school at sixteen. Like Student 2 she reported that she had little option, as her Dad had left school at that age and he felt that she should do the same.

However, an interesting feature to emerge was that the Essex group and the London group each contained a woman who had been educated privately. X was sent to a girls' boarding school for reasons that were not primarily to do with academic qualifications but to provide an appropriate social group of friends. Student 10 was taken out of the state sector as a result of bullying and sent to an all girls' private school. Illness affected her examination results.

Lack of academic achievement at sixteen, for whatever reason, did mean, however, that most students had to surmount obstacles to enter Higher Education, and in some cases these obstacles continued. Students 2 and 3 had overcome early negative influences about the value of education through becoming involved in their own children's schooling. Some students found studying without the support of their family very difficult.

Student 4 encountered hostility from her partner as a result of being on the course and eventually withdrew. Students 1 and 5, who were on mixed mode courses, which included full and part-time study reported that they had chosen this method of study because they either had family commitments or needed to work in casual employment to supplement their income.

The students had very different work experiences. The type of work they had undertaken influenced their competence and/or confidence in using spoken and written standard English. This is explored in more detail in the analysis of the interview data later in this chapter. The range of students' prior experience is important when considering the level of support that is needed and offered, as I discussed in Chapter 2 in the section on 'Learning Support Models.' This will be revisited in more detail in Chapter 5, where implications for educational policy and practice are considered.

Initial Teacher Training

The second issue I wish to discuss relates to the provision of training. My assumption at the outset of the research that institutions demand the same entry requirements for their B Ed courses and offer similar provision was mistaken. Different institutions demand different entry requirements in their endeavours to broaden access to Higher Education. Moreover, the length of the courses varies within and between institutions and this may result in different types of student experience. The range of provision is particularly relevant in the current climate when teacher education departments are adapting to new, ever-changing government initiatives. The introduction of an Initial Teacher Training National Curriculum and Ofsted inspections of teacher training institutions are intended to redress inequality of provision, while at the same time the government continues to relax entry requirements and is encouraging a range of providers, who offer very different experiences. For instance part-time modular courses are being funded with students spending an increasing amount of time in school and less in the university. This has implications for the delivery of the subject knowledge requirements of Circular 4/98, which includes explicit knowledge of the grammar of standard English.

The contextual information collected on a small number of students and the types of teacher training courses in two education departments revealed a diverse student body and a wide range of provision and entry requirements. The statistical information was supplemented by interview data, which illustrated the complexity of interpreting statistical information. This should be taken into account when considering the implications for policy and practice.

ADDRESSING THE FIRST RESEARCH QUESTION – WHAT DO THESE STUDENTS KNOW ABOUT SPOKEN/WRITTEN STANDARD ENGLISH?

Main Findings

The analysis of the data reflects issues that have been the subject of educational debate during the 20th century and that continue to have a high priority. My findings are:

- The complexity of defining spoken standard English is related to the differences between spoken and written language.
- Appropriate register choice (which may include non-standard dialect) enhances communication.
- The correlation between subject knowledge and application is not straightforward.

I have explored the complex issues underpinning these findings in the analysis of the data in the following sections by breaking down the main research questions to explore implicit and explicit knowledge of standard English.

How competent are these students in their use of spoken standard English?

Presentation and analysis of data from taped interviews

I have provided two separate tables, one for the Essex group (Figure 4.3) and one for the London group (Figure 4.4), setting out the non-standard features used in interview.

**FIGURE 4.3 NON-STANDARD FEATURES USED IN INTERVIEWS
– ESSEX SAMPLE**

Student	A	D	R	X
<i>Vocabulary</i>				
Words	2	1	1	0
Phrases	2	1	2	0
<i>Grammar</i>				
Part of speech	0	1	1	2
Verb tense	1	0	0	0
Subject verb agreement	0	0	0	0
Double negative	0	0	0	0
Pronouns	0	1	0	0

**FIGURE 4.4 NON-STANDARD FEATURES USED IN INTERVIEWS
– LONDON SAMPLE**

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<i>Vocabulary</i>										
Words	0	13	0	2	1	0	2	3	0	0
Phrases	0	6	0	1	0	1	5	3	0	0
<i>Grammar</i>										
Part of speech	0	2	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Verb tense	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	4	0	0
Subject verb agreement	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0
Double negative	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Pronouns	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	4	0	0

‘Non-standard vocabulary’ – I have used the term to encompass non-standard dialect words, colloquialisms and slang as defined in Appendix 1.

The difficulties of deciding which usages are informal and which are non-standard are discussed in the analysis of the data in the following pages.

The actual examples of non-standard vocabulary and grammar used are listed under the notes which follow.

Vocabulary

No *non-standard dialect words* were noted.

Colloquial words and phrases ranged from 0 –19 in individual students' interviews.

Colloquial expressions were used by two of the Essex students. A used 'had a binge' and 'I still hiccup with my punctuation.' R used 'O.K', 'on the flip side', and 'pulled up' to mean 'corrected'.

Three of the London students (Int. 2, 7 and 8) used a considerable number of words on the spectrum of colloquial to slang.

Student 2, whom I found it easiest to engage with, used the largest number of colloquial and slang words and expressions. These included: 'hung up on it', 'to see if I could hack it', '20 quid a week', 'no big deal', 'I don't get it', 'naff', 'crap', 'posh', 'boffs', 'stropky', 'chucked out', 'freaked out'.

Again Interviewee 7's use of language was lively and colloquial.

Expressions such as, 'as if I'd gone doolally', 'the posh's way', injected vigour into the student's language. Student 10, who had gone to private school, displayed no non-standard vocabulary at all, although she used 'gosh' as an exclamation.

Student A used a range of similes and metaphors to convey her anxieties about the grammatical knowledge she needed to acquire as a result of Circular10/97. For example, she described the first year of the course as 'like an arm chair, and it was nice and comfortable ...and this year I feel like I'm perched on a bar stool about to fall off.'

Student 2, as well as using colloquial phrases and slang also demonstrated a wide vocabulary, using descriptive words, such as 'notorious', 'mortified' and 'insular'. She drew upon standard and non-standard vocabulary to

communicate effectively. In this instance the student's home language added to her language repertoire, a point that is important when considering access issues and Circular 4/98's requirement that standard English is spoken at interview.

These examples all relate to an informal register. I would not define these usages as non-standard in the context of a semi-formal interview, but they might equally be interpreted as non-standard grammatical uses. The difficulty in distinguishing between grammar and appropriate register is indicative of the problematic nature of defining 'non-standard'.

Two the students, D and A, punctuated their speech with 'you know' and 'sort of'. A, who used 'you know' 31 times and 'sort of' 14 times, mentioned in her interview that she had difficulty finding the correct word or phrase when she was writing. She may have been using these phrases in her speech to give her time to think, to find a suitable word, to draw the listener in or it may have been just a habit. (Crystal 1995, p.229).

Accent

Two Essex students abbreviated 'because' to 'cos' and 'yes' to 'yeah'. Whether 'cos' and 'yeah', are seen as dialect, accent features or abbreviations appropriate to an informal register is debatable, again illustrating the difficulty identified above.

The student (Int. 9) who recollected speaking standard English at home, but cockney with her friends, consistently clipped the endings of words – 'havin'' 'goin'' 'gonna' 'yeah'. This feature of accent, one phoneme being replaced by another, was a very noticeable class accent. This student demonstrated no non-standard features of vocabulary or grammar, perhaps illustrating the National Curriculum guidelines that it is possible to speak *standard English with any accent*.

Grammar

Student D used the preposition 'of' to follow the preposition 'outside' in the following sentence, 'It's only when you go outside of an area you tend to notice.' The Oxford Modern English Dictionary (1995) states that this is a

disputed or controversial use. This example further illustrates the difficulties of identifying the linguistic features of standard English. The reasons some people pay attention to such detail would appear to be concerned with the social and political functions of standard English, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. Student R also had a non-standard use of preposition. She said '*In* the grammatical side', where it would have been more usual to say '*On*'.

Student 3 used prepositions in a non-standard way. She had been educated in three different English speaking countries and her use of prepositions may reflect the different 'Englishes' that she had encountered as a child or problems with a written register. She used 'in which' instead of 'on which' several times, for example, 'evidence in which.' In this instance the positioning of the preposition tends to be a written construction or a formal spoken construction and may indicate lack of familiarity such structures. She also used 'emerging on' rather than 'emerging from'. Some uses were less awkward but did not sound quite right, such as 'an interest to view' rather than an 'interest in viewing'.

Student 2 used two expressions '*a snob thing*' (noun used as an adjective) and '*a real bad school*' (adjective used as an adverb). I would prefer to define these as colloquialisms. However, unlike the words previously discussed under vocabulary, I have included them in the table under 'word classes' as they might be viewed as non-standard usage because the choice of word classes does not accord with a prescriptive account of grammatical use.

Student, X, used an adjective in place of an adverb on two occasions, 'different' for 'differently' and 'correct' for 'correctly'. The latter example was used as part of an adverbial phrase 'grammatically correct(ly)'. This may have reflected the student's subconscious awareness of collocation, as the phrase 'a grammatically correct sentence' is a common use. The same student used the phrase 'grammatically correctly' appropriately, when speaking in a more reflective, self-conscious way.

Student A used 'done' instead of 'did' in the phrase 'my daughter recently done'. Only one student (Int. 8) used a range of non-standard grammatical constructions, even though on reflection she was aware of them. A double

negative was noted. She consistently used 'I done' and 'I went and done', when using the simple past tense. The past tense 'done' was noted in 92% of schools in a survey in the South (Milroy and Milroy 1993). She also mixed 'present and past tenses, 'I come in and acquired me own.' Subject verb agreement was non-standard 'there was three bits to it'. She also used pronouns in a non-standard way for example, 'you're....., isn't it', and 'some of them that have'. This reflects research (Milroy and Milroy 1993) that the demonstrative 'them' was the most widely reported feature of non-standard usage. D used the pronoun 'that' instead of 'who' in the following sentence, 'It's like people that are from the North that come down.'

There were numerous examples of the looser constructions discussed in Crystal (1995) that characterise spoken discourse. Sentence boundaries were often unclear with meaning being conveyed by pauses and intonation, for example, 'It's like people that are from the North that come down... you notice their accent... and the same as when you move out.' This is indicative of the process of thinking whilst talking, rather than planning and refining the content, as occurs with most writing.

Summary of findings on students' competence in spoken standard English

An analysis of the students' use of language exemplified Perera's observation on the problems of defining standard English that '[i]t is much harder to arrive at a workable description which will include spoken standard English' (Pereira 1994 p.84), which was discussed in Chapter 2. These problems relate to issues of register and context. It was difficult to decide whether or when a colloquialism should count as 'non-standard'. The use of what I defined as colloquial expressions and slang by three students enhanced effective communication. It appeared to be deliberate, a way of communicating in a lively manner and was a feature of personal style/identity. This issue is discussed in Chapter 2 with reference to Ivanic's (1998) research on personal identity and written academic discourse.

As interviewer, I had chosen to use an informal register to establish a rapport with the students and to put them at ease. Some students were more relaxed than others in the way they related to me. This may have been a reflection of their own confidence in an interview setting or the recognition

of a common background mediated through language. Their speech may have mirrored mine. Those students where the rapport was good used an informal register which might be mistaken as non-standard usage. These examples highlight the problematic nature of defining non-standard English. It may be significant that the student that I had the best rapport with used the most colloquialisms. This suggests that the ability to select an appropriate register to suit the context and audience is important. This would indicate that a broad language repertoire is important. An informal register is as important in some contexts as the role of spoken standard English or the ability to use constructions and vocabulary suited to formal situations.

A small number of non- standard grammatical constructions were used by all but four of the students, reflecting what Trudgill (1983) terms aspects of British social dialects, marking the socio-economic class of the speakers, rather than their regional province. With the broadening of access this was perhaps to be expected. Trudgill also points out that because standard English is descended from the dialects originally spoken in the South-east of England ‘the differences between standard English and non-standard dialects in the south of England, while socially very significant, are linguistically rather trivial, and few in number’ (Trudgill 1983, p.188). This statement reflects the different emphases and purposes behind the different definitions of standard English that were summarised in Chapter 1 and are examined throughout this thesis.

The fact that Student 8 mentioned in interview that she was aware of her non-standard usage, she appeared to unconsciously use the most common features cited in research. This would appear to support Milroy and Milroy’s argument that perhaps we should acknowledge the development of a ‘standardising’ non-standard variety of English (Milroy and Milroy 1993). This is particularly interesting in the light of the student’s perception of having spoken standard English at home. She observed that ‘I suppose it depends on what sort of standard English’ and that ‘I actually spent a lot of my childhood with an aunt who lives in Essex and she probably spoke more standard English than perhaps mum and dad did.’ The notion of degrees of spoken standard English is explored in Chapter 2, where the problems of defining spoken standard English are explored.

The example of this particular student suggests that it may be difficult to change one's spoken language in informal or semi-formal situations, such as this interview, once habits are firmly established. Alternatively, she may have felt her own non-standard dialect was appropriate in the situation. Other factors, for which I have no evidence but that would need to be considered, are the dialect that she comes into contact with the most and her motivation for change. For example, several of the other students who identified themselves as coming from non-standard English speaking backgrounds mentioned that they had altered their dialect and accent as a result of being in the work place and the influence of university and school placements. The comparative absence of non-standard constructions in their interviews would appear to support their statements. In these instances the data would suggest that, although it may be difficult, it is possible to change one's dialect and accent if the incentive is there. For some students the desire to succeed in the work place and the exposure to different varieties of English appeared to be instrumental in bringing about change.

Methodological issues relating to empathy (Woods 1996), limitations of data and issues of confidentiality and ownership surrounding the collection and dissemination of data are discussed in Chapters 3 and 5.

No attempt at validity is made because of the small sample.

What explicit knowledge about spoken standard English do these students have?

Analysis of interview data from both studies

The students should have been aware of the distinctions between spoken and written modes, formal and informal registers, and accent and dialect, because of the content of their course and their familiarity with the National Curriculum. However they often conflated spoken and written language and accent and dialect. Their perceptions reflect the problematic issues surrounding definitions of standard English, some of which focus on linguistic features and others which focus on the social and political functions.

When asked specifically whether there was any difference between spoken and written standard English, the responses were similar to D's reply, 'More or less the same things I should say.' However, one student, X, mentioned the informality of spoken language, 'I mean you can use colloquialisms within proper speech.' This was interesting, as she herself did not use any in her interview. Student A made reference to the difference between the spoken and written modes when she was discussing her academic writing. 'It's cos obviously you don't write as you speak.... If I could write as I speak.' This reflected an aspect of Ivanič's research (1998) on identity and academic discourse, which I discuss in Chapter 2. Ivanič reported that several of her interviewees

'mentioned a commitment to making their writing accessible and reader friendly, and to avoiding the sort of language which they felt excludes people from the academic community. The discourse characteristics which they felt were associated with this value were those more associated with 'spoken language'' (p.312).

Only two students made a distinction between accent and dialect, 'even if you've got an accent you can still speak grammatically correctly' (Int. X). Student 1 stated that 'You can speak standard English with an accent', but it was unclear whether this was a reference to class, region or both.

When the London students were asked *explicitly*, as a result of progressive focussing, to define spoken standard English, six students immediately mentioned pronunciation or accent. This was expressed in phrases such as 'as the news is read' (Int. 1 P4); 'I suppose BBC English' (Int. 6 P8); 'Speaking with a plum in your mouth' (Int. 4 P9); 'the plummy mouth' (Int. 7P1). Examples of people who spoke standard English were given as Margaret Thatcher and The Royal Family.

The majority of the students conflated accent and dialect in interview, even though they are familiar with the National Curriculum document where the distinction is clearly made. This may be because the tension between speaking standard English and using a broad accent reflects the social nuances which surround the definition of spoken standard English in some

quarters. Standard English is perceived as a middle or upper class variety and as such is associated with Received Pronunciation (RP) or a modified version of it.

Dialect was mentioned less frequently in response to the direct question on defining standard English. Only three students referred to it with regional vocabulary being cited as a feature; no mention was made of grammatical constructions. One student described standard English as ‘without dialect’ (Int. 8 P3), rather than as a non-regional dialect, although it could be argued that this is what she meant. There was some acknowledgement of conformity by one student, ‘a nice standard way of speaking’ (Int. 3 P5), but degrees of standard English were also mentioned by Student 8, as discussed earlier in this chapter.

The London group were also asked as part of their Exit Audit at the end of the year to state the difference between accent and dialect and to define Standard English. Of the eight students from my sample who sat the audit, all were clear about accent but still unsure about dialect. Five students still associated standard English with ‘correctness’.

Summary of students’ explicit knowledge of spoken standard English

The students’ discussions in interview about what constitutes spoken standard English illustrate the complexity of defining it. The conflation of accent and dialect by some students has implications for the correct implementation of the National Curriculum. The association of ‘standard’ with ‘correctness’ reflects the social and political agenda behind the National Curriculum definition and suggests a Model 1 approach to language in terms of prescriptivism, as described in Chapter 2. The London students’ definitions of ‘accent’, ‘dialect’ and ‘standard’ in their Exit Audits, taken at the end of the year after course modules and self study on the subject knowledge component of Circular 4/98 were comparable to the range of answers from the year group’s audits. Accent was understood, but there were still some misconceptions in their definitions of ‘dialect’ and ‘standard’.

How competent are these students in their use of written standard English?

I have again provided two separate tables, figures 4.5 and 4.6, with accompanying notes, one for the Essex group and one for the London Group. As explained in Chapter 3, the range of data that I collected in the main study is different to that collected in the pilot study. Consequently, I will analyse and compare the data collected within each study *separately* in the first instance and then synthesise the findings where appropriate.

Presentation and analysis of Essex data

Notes on figure 4.5

Hand-written account of self-identified language needs

Student A did not at first have the confidence to provide me with a hand written account and insisted on taking it away to word process, so that she could use a grammar and spell check. She provided me with a hand-written account after interview to support my research.

Word-processed assignments

The students used spell checks in their word-processed assignments so it was not possible to analyse the assignments for spelling errors as originally intended. It was not clear whether a grammar check was used, as all students made errors in punctuation. Awkward constructions were noted and an assessment of communicative competence in terms of purpose and audience was attempted. This entailed looking at organisation and style to assess whether a coherent argument was presented in an appropriate academic register. I decided to look at academic register, as this was an area of difficulty identified by in interview by students A and X. This was also a feature identified by Ivanic (1998) in her case studies of students' proficiency with academic writing, which I have referred to in Chapter 2.

FIGURE 4.5 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH IN WORD PROCESSED AND HAND WRITTEN ASSIGNMENT – ESSEX SAMPLE

Student	A			D			R			X		
	Free Writing	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Free Writing	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Free Writing	Assignment 1	Assignment 2	Free Writing	Assignment 1	Assignment 2
	Word Processed	Word Processed	Word Processed	Hand Written	Word Processed	Word Processed	Hand Written	Word Processed	Word Processed	Hand Written	Word Processed	Word Processed
Use of non- standard English												
Vocabulary					'both' used instead of 'all'		0	colloquial phrase 'fill me in'		0	'effect' used instead of affect	
Grammar		Subject verb agreement(1)		0	Awkward Syntax (1)		0	Tense change (1)		0		
Punctuation												
Capitalisation	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Omission or incorrect placing of full stops.	1	3	2	1	2	0	0	1	2	0	3	2
Comma splice	2	4	6	2	7	7	1	4	5	2	5	6
Commas — omission or incorrect placing	0	4	8	1	2	7	4	8	6	0	1	2
Apostrophe	0	1	1	0	2	1	0	0	0	0	1	0
Paragraphs	No errors	No errors	No errors	No errors	No errors	No errors	No errors	No errors	No errors	Incorrect use	No errors	No errors
Organisation and style												
Structure	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear	Clear	Note form	Weak introduction and conclusion	No introduction and limited conclusion	Clear	Clear	Clear
Register		Inappropriate use of personal anecdote			More formal register needed			More formal register needed				
<u>Content</u>												
Knowledge about language		Sound	Sound	Dialect equated with disadvantage	Confusion over word classes	Confusion over word classes		Sound	Sound		Misuse of metalanguage	
Student identified needs	Spelling and punctuation			Subject knowledge and application-word level			Teaching methods			Spelling, grammar and punctuation		

Note – Omission of full stop does not include comma splice. This error is noted under commas. All students used computerised spell checks. Students D and X made one spelling error each in hand written assignments.

Vocabulary

No non-standard vocabulary was noted. One colloquial phrase was used. Student X used The word ‘effect ‘ instead of ‘affect’ in her word-processed assignment. Without questioning the student, it was not clear whether this was due to a lack of understanding about the meanings of the words, lack of knowledge about word classes, a spelling error or merely a typographical error. Asking students about their choice of language was a strength of Ivanic’s (1998) research as I discussed in Chapter 2. I consider this issue further in Chapter 5 when I evaluate the research methods and the implications of the findings.

Grammar

The students were able to use the grammatical constructions of written standard English. Only two errors were noted. Both were in word-processed assignments and related to verb use. One was lack of subject verb agreement and the other was inconsistency of tense. The latter would not have been corrected by a grammar check, as it was not in the same sentence. The effect of I T on writing is a factor that must be taken into account when considering the implications of the findings.

Punctuation

The main errors in punctuation were *the misuse or omission of full stops and commas*, reflecting the findings of the Technical Accuracy Project, which looked at the writing of GCSE pupils (QCA 1999). The use of a comma splice, ‘a term used to describe the use of a comma where a full stop is required, thus splicing together two sentences that should be separate’ (QCA 1999), was the most significant error, suggesting students’ imperfect understanding of the grammatical boundaries of sentences or the inability to translate this into writing. Students R and X had identified in interview the difficulties they had with written English, preferring an informal spoken register. This was reflected in their use of punctuation. They appeared to use a comma to indicate where they might pause if they were speaking. For example, student R always used a comma before ‘and’. Student X consistently used a comma before ‘however’, when at times a full-stop was

required. The following is an example taken from her word processed assignment: 'When listening to this tape it is easy to describe Mark as a shy child who doesn't like to converse freely, however once the story is underway he speaks clearly and fluently.'

The *apostrophe* to indicate possession was incorrectly used by students A, D and X, suggesting that its importance in conveying meaning was not fully understood or, in the use of 'it's' for 'its', that the exception to the rule had not been taught or understood.

None of the students used *semi-colons* or *colons*, so it was not possible to judge their ability to use them. Their general lack of confidence and proficiency with the comma and full stop would suggest a lack of confidence with these other boundary markers, or that the structure of their sentences did not warrant their use.

The insertion of book titles and quotations was problematic for D, suggesting unfamiliarity with academic or formal writing.

An interesting factor to emerge when the quantitative data for X is read in conjunction with the interview data is that she specifically mentions being taught punctuation but having little opportunity to practise it. Her concern over her competence appears to be justified and, although this is a single case, it does signify the importance of considering not only whether but how punctuation is taught.

Register

Three of the four students used an informal register in their word-processed assignments. There was a mismatch between the students' perceptions and the university's guidelines on what is appropriate in an academic assignment. This may have been because they were writing about their experiences with children and the boundaries between describing, reporting and analysing were difficult to negotiate. This issue is explored in Chapter 2 in a discussion of Ivanic's research (1998) on the problems students have in attempting academic discourse. Related reading in this area made me aware that academic discourse may vary in its degree of formality.

Presentation and analysis of London data

Notes on Figures 4.6 and 4.7

I developed the table format from the one used in the pilot study to include within it the examples of the non-standard features of grammar and punctuation errors that were used for ease of reference, rather than providing a list of numbers and explanatory notes. As explained in Chapter 3, I decided not to assess register in either piece of writing as progressive focusing entailed concentration on grammar and punctuation. However, in writing up the data at later stage when I was more aware that the issue of register was related to ideas of non-standardness for some people, I felt that I could have included it.

I have cross-referenced the analysis of the students' hand written English in their exit audits with the analysis of their written English in their word processed assignments with reference to their use of non-standard grammar and errors in punctuation. By examining the word-processed work in conjunction with hand written work in a test situation, I hoped to gain more information on their competence in written standard English. There are limitations to both pieces of evidence. In the exit audit there are pressures of time, nervousness and possibly unfamiliarity with writing in longhand, whereas in the word-processed work a grammar check may have been used. However, despite the reservations mentioned here there are some interesting points of comparison.

FIGURE 4.6 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH IN WORD PROCESSED ASSIGNMENT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of non-standard grammar	0	1 non-standard use of preposition	5 non-standard uses of prepositions 4 tense inconsistencies 2 non-standard uses of pronoun	Did not submit	Did not submit	0	1 subject verb agreement 1 misuse of pronoun 1 non-standard use of preposition	3 subject verb agreement 1 non-standard use of word class-adjective used in place of adverb	1 subject verb agreement 2 tense inconsistencies 2 non-standard uses of prepositions	1 tense inconsistency 2 misuse of pronoun 1 non-standard use of pronoun 1 non-standard use of preposition
Punctuation errors	2 omissions of comma after adverb qualifying sentence	2 misuses of full stop 4 comma splice 5 misuses or omissions of comma 2 omissions of apostrophe for plural possession	1 misuse of full-stop 2 comma splices 3 omissions of comma separating clauses			2 omissions of comma after adverb qualifying sentence	1 misuse of capitalisation 1 misuse of full-stop 4 comma splices 4 misuses of comma 1 misuse of brackets	3 comma splices 3 misuse or omission of comma	1 omission of full stop 3 misuses of comma 4 omissions of comma 1 omission of apostrophe for possession	3 comma splices 3 omissions of comma Omission of capitalisation for title

FIGURE 4.7 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH WITHIN EXIT AUDIT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of non-standard grammar	0	0	1 misuse of pronoun	Did not take	Did not take	0	0	1 subject verb agreement 1 misuse of pronoun	0	1 subject verb agreement
Punctuation errors	0	1 omission of apostrophe 2 misuse of apostrophe	1 omission of apostrophe	Did not take	Did not take	0	0	0	2 misuse of apostrophe No question marks	1 comma splice
Spelling errors	1	1	1	Did not take	Did not take	1	0	1	3	0

FIGURE 4.6 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH IN WORD PROCESSED ASSIGNMENT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of non-standard grammar	0	1 non-standard use of preposition	5 non-standard uses of prepositions 4 tense inconsistencies 2 non-standard uses of pronoun	Did not submit	Did not submit	0	1 subject verb agreement 1 misuse of pronoun 1 non-standard use of preposition	3 subject verb agreement 1 non-standard use of word class-adjective used in place of adverb	1 subject verb agreement 2 tense inconsistencies 2 non-standard uses of prepositions	1 tense inconsistency 2 misuse of pronoun 1 non-standard use of pronoun 1 non-standard use of preposition
Punctuation errors	2 omissions of comma after adverb qualifying sentence	2 misuses of full stop 4 comma splice 5 misuses or omissions of comma 2 omissions of apostrophe for plural possession	1 misuse of full-stop 2 comma splices 3 omissions of comma separating clauses			2 omissions of comma after adverb qualifying sentence	1 misuse of capitalisation 1 misuse of full-stop 4 comma splices 4 misuses of comma 1 misuse of brackets	3 comma splices 3 misuse or omission of comma	1 omission of full stop 3 misuses of comma 4 omissions of comma 1 omission of apostrophe for possession	3 comma splices 3 omissions of comma Omission of capitalisation for title

FIGURE 4.7 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH WITHIN EXIT AUDIT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of non-standard grammar	0	0	1 misuse of pronoun	Did not take	Did not take	0	0	1 subject verb agreement 1 misuse of pronoun	0	1 subject verb agreement
Punctuation errors	0	1 omission of apostrophe 2 misuse of apostrophe	1 omission of apostrophe	Did not take	Did not take	0	0	0	2 misuse of apostrophe No question marks	1 comma splice
Spelling errors	1	1	1	Did not take	Did not take	1	0	1	3	0

FIGURE 4.6 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH IN WORD PROCESSED ASSIGNMENT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of non-standard grammar	0	1 non-standard use of preposition	5 non-standard uses of prepositions 4 tense inconsistencies 2 non-standard uses of pronoun	Did not submit	Did not submit	0	1 subject verb agreement 1 misuse of pronoun 1 non-standard use of preposition	3 subject verb agreement 1 non-standard use of word class-adjective used in place of adverb	1 subject verb agreement 2 tense inconsistencies 2 non-standard uses of prepositions	1 tense inconsistency 2 misuse of pronoun 1 non-standard use of pronoun 1 non-standard use of preposition
Punctuation errors	2 omissions of comma after adverb qualifying sentence	2 misuses of full stop 4 comma splice 5 misuses or omissions of comma 2 omissions of apostrophe for plural possession	1 misuse of full-stop 2 comma splices 3 omissions of comma separating clauses			2 omissions of comma after adverb qualifying sentence	1 misuse of capitalisation 1 misuse of full-stop 4 comma splices 4 misuses of comma 1 misuse of brackets	3 comma splices 3 misuse or omission of comma	1 omission of full stop 3 misuses of comma 4 omissions of comma 1 omission of apostrophe for possession	3 comma splices 3 omissions of comma Omission of capitalisation for title

FIGURE 4.7 DATA COLLECTED ON WRITTEN ENGLISH WITHIN EXIT AUDIT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Use of non-standard grammar	0	0	1 misuse of pronoun	Did not take	Did not take	0	0	1 subject verb agreement 1 misuse of pronoun	0	1 subject verb agreement
Punctuation errors	0	1 omission of apostrophe 2 misuse of apostrophe	1 omission of apostrophe	Did not take	Did not take	0	0	0	2 misuse of apostrophe No question marks	1 comma splice
Spelling errors	1	1	1	Did not take	Did not take	1	0	1	3	0

No non-standard dialect words, colloquialisms or slang were noted in either piece.

Grammar

The one non-standard use of a word class (adjective in place of an adverb), unlike in the analysis of spoken language, was judged by me to be non-standard grammar. This decision reflected my acceptance of certain constructions being appropriate in written English. Despite deciding not to focus on register, I was inadvertently considering what was appropriate in an academic assignment.

Only two students, 1 and 6, used no non-standard features in the word-processed assignment in comparison to five students, 1, 2, 6, 7 and 9 in the exit audit. This may have been because the word-processed assignment was a longer and more complex task and resulted in students trying out what they considered to be features of formal academic writing and therefore there were more opportunities to make mistakes. Two of the students, 1 and 6, were consistent in their ability to write in standard English in both pieces of writing and student 2 had only one non-standard use of a preposition in her word-processed work. Student 1's perception that her grammar was sound appears to be substantiated from the written data and her high audit results.

Student 3, who, out of the sample, had the lowest result in the exit audit, used the most non-standard features in her word-processed assignment. There were eleven overall, although there was evidence of only one in the short written extract within the exit audit. She had lived and been educated in three different English speaking countries. I discuss interview data on students' early language experiences later in this chapter.

The word-processed assignments from the four remaining students (7, 8, 9 and 10) contained between three and five different examples of non-standard usage. Lack of subject verb agreement was a feature in three of the assignments (students 7, 8 and 9) with student 8 using this particular non-standard feature three times. Student 8 had used this non-standard feature

once in her writing in the exit audit. The lack of agreement between subject and verb occurred most frequently when there was a gap between the subject and verb as a result of a compound or complex sentence. This is often not corrected by a computerised grammar check. Non-standard use of prepositions included a variety of examples, many of which were classified in the dictionary as contested use. There were also examples of prepositions being inserted after a verb unnecessarily, such as ‘what is required *for* when they enter compulsory education.’ The examples did not hinder meaning.

Although the word-processed assignments provided more examples of non-standard uses of grammar than the short written extracts in the exit audit, there were only five variations, which reflects the data from the QCA Technical Accuracy Project.

Punctuation

As well as using the grammar of standard English, Student 1 and Student 6’s use of punctuation was also consistently sound, whereas Student 2 had the most errors of all the students in both pieces of work. She had mentioned in her interview that she was not confident in her use of punctuation, especially the use of the comma, and this was reflected in her word-processed assignment where there were nine errors in comma use, including the comma splice. Inability to use the apostrophe featured in both her pieces of writing. Student 3 used the comma splice and did not always use a comma to separate a clause. She reported that she had been told at school, ‘If in doubt, leave it out,’ and was confused by the grammar checks that gave punctuation suggestions. The errors in punctuation made by all students were primarily about inappropriate use of the comma and full-stop and incorrect use of the apostrophe.

What explicit knowledge about written standard English do these students have?

I discuss the question by examining the exit audits of the London sample as I explain in Chapter 3 and consider the related question: ‘How does explicit knowledge about the grammar of standard English demonstrated in an audit relate to competence in its use?’

Figure 4.8 sets out the exit audit results of my sample group. I have included what I consider to be explicit knowledge about significant features of grammar, spelling and punctuation tested in the exit audit. In the analysis, the findings are cross referenced to the data on non-standard uses of grammar, punctuation and spelling errors in the students' writing both in the word- processed assignment and in the and in the written extract from the exit audit (Figure 4.7) to see whether there is a correlation between knowledge of rules and their application.

FIGURE 4.8 INFORMATION FROM EXIT AUDIT – LONDON SAMPLE

Student	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Exit Audit (marks out of 150)	127	113	96	Did not take	Did not take	111	100	125	102	123
Knowledge of word classes (marks out of 5)	3	3	1	Did not take	Did not take	3	2	3	2	5
Correction of non-standard English (marks out of 5)	5	5	5	Did not take	Did not take	5	5	5	5	5
Knowledge of spelling rules	✓	✓	✓	Did not take	Did not take	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Apostrophe rule	✓	✓	✓	Did not take	Did not take	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓

Note on Figure 4.8

Eight students from my sample of ten took the exit audit. Two students did not sit the paper because of personal circumstances.

Analysis of data collected from audits

In formal, decontextualised exercises all students in this study were able to identify non-standard forms and substitute the standard forms. However, as already discussed only two students had no non-standard features in their writing. A possible reason for the discrepancy was that the students knew that they were looking for errors in the audit. The relationship between grammatical knowledge and its application is not straightforward.

The students may be able to recognise errors in other people's writing, but still make them in their own.

Word classes

An analysis of the eight audit papers indicates that seven of the students still have difficulty identifying word classes, despite being given a range of criteria in university sessions to help them do so. The government directives, that both teachers and children should be able to identify word classes and use the appropriate terminology (Circular 4/98, The National Literacy Strategy 1998), appear to be a simple requirement. However, since words are classified by how they operate in a sentence, it is not as straightforward as it might appear, as the experience of these students would suggest. However, most students were using words appropriately in their writing, both in the hand-written work and in the word-processed assignment. The one exception was Student 8, who used an adjective in place of an adverb in the word-processed assignment. The data suggests that an explicit knowledge of word classes is not necessary to write in standard English. However, an explicit knowledge is necessary to teach the sentence level work as set out in the NLS framework.

Punctuation

All students except one explained and demonstrated the correct use of the apostrophe for possession when answering a question about its use. However, three students, 2,3 and 9 misused or omitted the apostrophe in the audit writing and Students 2 and 9 also misused it in their assignments. The fact that students 2 and 9 made errors in both pieces of writing suggest a lack of understanding on their part rather than nerves in the test or lack of

proof reading. Again it is difficult to draw a correlation between knowledge and application.

Spelling

Spelling rules and the use of etymology to assist spelling had been covered in a course module on 'Understanding Language'. Again all students were able to demonstrate their ability to use spelling rules in a question on spelling, but six students made at least one spelling error in their writing. Pronunciation, rather than knowledge of word class, word families or etymology, appeared to have influenced the transcription of 'haggared' for 'haggard', 'amist' for 'amidst' and 'sentance' for 'sentence', despite the knowledge that most words are not phonetically regular. Some errors may have been due to nerves in an examination. Such errors are not usually apparent in students' written assignments, because most students use word-processing packages that have a spell check. Consequently, tutors are not necessarily aware if a student has difficulty with spelling.

The relationship between explicit knowledge about standard English and competence in its use

The relationship between knowledge about grammar, punctuation and spelling and practical application, appears to be tenuous. The London students' implicit knowledge of most of the grammatical features of written standard English was more secure than their explicit knowledge, as demonstrated in the exit audit, especially in relation to word classes. On the other hand, explicit knowledge of the rules of spelling and punctuation was better than their application.

I now return to both sets of data collected from the Essex and London students on competence in written English.

Synthesis of findings on competence in written standard English from both studies

The use of word- processing packages with grammar and spell check facilities may restrict the number of non- standard constructions the students use. There were only five non- standard variations noted, the most common

being lack of subject verb agreement, when subject and verb are separated, and use of prepositions. Longer pieces of writing of in an academic genre posed more problems than shorter extracts of a personal nature or more familiar genre, even when these were hand-written.

Spell checks eliminated most spelling errors, except where spelling reflected a part of speech; for example, 'practice' used as a verb.

Errors in punctuation were predominantly the use of the comma splice and the use of the apostrophe to indicate possession. Grammar checks, if used, did not appear to correct such errors, perhaps indicating that an understanding of the grammar of standard English is necessary for word-processing tools to be used to full advantage.

Children need to know how to use full stops correctly to achieve Level 3 in the National Curriculum and the comma and apostrophe for Level 5. The students are required to demonstrate competency in the use of punctuation and ability to teach it to satisfy the requirements of Circular 4/98 (B5 f iii), and in the current climate need this competency to fulfil the standards necessary for the award of QTS. Only two students, (and even these made minor errors) fulfilled these criteria. This has implications for educational policies as I discuss in Chapter 5.

I acknowledge that I analysed two pieces of writing only from each student and that some errors might have been occurred as a result of carelessness. However, as I was teaching these students I knew their work and would have recognised if these pieces were unrepresentative.

ADDRESSING THE SECOND RESEARCH QUESTION – HOW DO STUDENTS POSITION THEMSELVES AS SPEAKERS AND WRITERS IN RELATION TO NOTIONS OF STANDARD ENGLISH?

This question was intended to explore how confident students felt about their use of spoken and written standard English and how this related to their competence in using the standard form. I wanted to discover whether there was any correlation between confidence, or lack of it, and their ability to comply with the linguistic rules and conventions as set out in frameworks such as the QCA Technical Accuracy Project. In addition to this I was

interested in their attitudes, as student teachers, to standard English as the prestige variety that should be taught in schools. In considering the political and social functions of standard English, I wanted to find out whether the students felt ownership of this variety of English.

While the government's attempts to raise standards in education has focused on the teaching and testing of specific linguistic features of standard English, other groups such as sociolinguists have emphasised the need to contest the social and political discourses surrounding the current move towards legislating for standard English within our schools. I felt that the student teachers' views of their own language needs had not been elicited. A strength of my research was to work with a small sample of student teachers to consider the linguistic and the social and political aspects of standard English and the interface between them. This entailed examining the linguistic features the students used in their speech and writing and exploring in interview students' perceptions of spoken and written standard English and its place in the National Curriculum.

The interviews carried out in Essex and London are the source of the data. I have explained in detail in Chapter 3 the relationship between the pilot and the main study and my justification for incorporating liberal amounts of transcription into the analysis.

Main Findings

A significant feature of these interviews was that, from neutral questions about definitions of standard English and the language background that the students had come from, the answers reflected many of the controversial issues from linguistic and political debates that have reverberated over the centuries.

- All students perceived standard English as the prestige variety.
- Its status was primarily linked to class issues.
- Spoken standard English was evaluated and discussed with reference to accent rather than dialect.

However, embedded within these views was a mass of contradictions, which I attempted to unravel and explore.

Perceptions of spoken standard English

Interesting data to emerge from these interviews was the consistency in the students' perceptions of spoken standard English as the prestige variety, although there were conflicting views over whether it should have that status. However, these attitudes were mainly influenced by their perception of accent rather than dialect, as this was often a more overt indication of regional, class, racial and peer group identity than dialect (e.g. Honey 1997, Milroy and Milroy 1985). The students' conflation of accent and dialect has already been discussed with reference to their definitions of spoken standard English. Reference to class, geographical location, gender, race, intelligence, education and standards were often inextricably bound together in the ensuing discussions about the status of standard English and the value accorded to other varieties.

In the following section I present the data under separate headings for ease of reference but acknowledge that the areas frequently overlap. Refer to Chapter 3 for conventions for presenting the interview data.

The status of spoken standard English (Accent and social class)

Contrary to my expectations at the outset of this research, three of the students in the Essex sample described themselves as coming from home/school backgrounds where standard English was spoken. Two of these students were prejudiced towards accents that did not approximate to received pronunciation (RP). This was in marked contrast to the attitude of two of the London students, who had themselves experienced prejudice because of their cockney accents. X, who came from 'a fairly affluent area', and had been 'brought up to eat and speak with the queen', spoke of her accent 'dropping' and her use of 'slang' as a result of some casual work experience she had undertaken. For X, accent was a significant indicator of people's occupation and status. She proceeded to mimic the accent of factory workers leaving off initial and final consonants, 'er, 'e, goin'. While working as a telephonist she had changed her accent to accommodate her

perception of people's status, 'I had to have a certain telephone voice because you had, you know, to be able to speak to very high people, high ranking people, so you had to be able to speak, but equally you had to come down and in the canteen be like all your friends and change it.' Since coming to college she had 'had to bring it up again.' R, who had worked in a bank found it hard 'because they had very, very cockney accents.'

Four of the students reported that they had encountered prejudice in the work-place because of their broad London accents. For example, one student, who worked for a travel company before returning to education, had been asked by her employer whether she had ever thought of having elocution lessons and was told, 'Now you've got all that knowledge – now you should – you'll go up in this company, but you'll never do it with that accent' (Int. 2 P6). Another reported being 'reduced to tears' (Int7 P5), because of negative comments about her accent. On the other hand, the dilemma of changing one's accent to fit in with the workplace was also mentioned. One student had the 'mickey' taken out of her, when her sister visited her at work and 'she was talking rather posh as she put it' (Int. 8 P2) and did not revert to her home accent, as she would normally have done with her family.

The link between clothes, image and accent was evident in four of the interviews. Student 2 had gone to a job 'looking the part...suit, dressed, everything you're supposed to look like', but said that her accent had let her down. Student 3's decision on whether to use standard English, in which she included a modified accent, to address customers at work, was based on how a person was dressed, 'If they were dressed in a certain way you would then speak standard English.' Student 4 also described how she would change her accent on meeting a new client, 'And if on a one to one level you actually met the person, God, and they were dressed in a certain way...' (Int. 4 P5). Student 6 reported that she had to have a certain accent and clothes to be a receptionist. The role accent plays in portraying a certain image is considered in a later discussion in this chapter about the role of the teacher and what it is to be a professional.

Two students who described themselves as coming from working class backgrounds identified their own prejudice when encountering different accents, 'People from grammar and private school backgrounds... you know I really don't understand why they have to speak with that high-pitched tone' (Int. 7 P5). 'You class people into, you put them into pigeon holes, because they open their mouth and they speak' (Int. 2 P14).

Student 5, a Ugandan student, mentioned the prejudice shown towards class accents in her country. This was exemplified in the distinctions made between rural and city areas, 'the people who come from Gulu and Kipgurn – these are the two main towns...the people who come from Gulu think they're very posh...and they actually look down on other people from the more rural areas' (Int. 5 P 6). The wealth and sophistication of the city dwellers are demonstrated through the use of language, a parallel that has occurred in England as is discussed in Chapter 2, in 'The Development of standard English.'

In contrast to the Ugandan student's experience, the Canadian interviewee felt that in Canada, 'There was no class system. I was never, ever aware of anybody kind of putting on a Queen's English type accent when I was talking to them. Your neighbour would wear jeans and speak the same as you' (Int. 3 P 3). Her experience may have been of a limited social group, but again the links that are made between clothes, accent and social class reflect a definition of standard English that is concerned with its social function, rather than its linguistic features.

Accent, class and morality

Throughout the interviews, there was 'a characteristic slippage between linguistic and moral terms' (Cameron 1995), regardless of the class or regional accent the students themselves had. Value-laden terms abound: 'nicely', 'proper', 'correct', 'not a common accent', are juxtaposed with 'bring up', 'improve', 'dropping', 'awful', 'lazy', 'cockney', 'monotone', 'twang', the latter terms signifying a fall from the standard. R, in discussing her cockney work colleagues, stated that she had 'learned to speak as they did in a very lazy way.' When questioned further she stated that 'lazy perhaps isn't the right word, they weren't forming certain words and

sentences.’ Student 7 defined her own accent as ‘lazy speech’. The most common features of a London inner city accent, such as the glottal stop and ‘things like ‘aitch’ and stuff like that’ (Int. 9 P2) came into this category, reflecting research on the negative perceptions accorded to inner city accents (Trudgill 1984).

Regional Accents

Four students described the prejudice they experienced because their accent identified the speaker as coming from a different area. It was not only regional or cross-cultural differences that engendered prejudice. Different accents within London and emanating from London were mentioned. Their adoption was related to inclusion. Student 2 spoke of prejudice against her South London accent by girls from the East End with whom she worked, ‘They used to ridicule me, because I didn’t have an East End accent. And they used to say, “ Saaf London, you’re a Saaf Londoner”’ (Int. 2 P13). This same student reported that she had been ‘pulled up at school about my East, my cockney accent’ (Int. 2 P13). It was interesting that in this instance the peer group recognised differences within the London accent, whereas the school differentiated between what they perceived as standard (acceptable) and non-standard (unacceptable) accents. This student’s experience of the school operating class prejudice in their response to accents was very similar to my own experience as a secondary school pupil.

Not only is London mentioned as encompassing a range of accents, so too was Essex. One student cited ‘Harlowese’ as a ‘different type of language’, which included a different accent and dialect. A Harlowese accent was described as having a mixed derivation: ‘It’s got an East End and a sort of Essex influence’ (Int. 4 P3). This student articulated several points about language development in her discussion about her language background. She stated that although the influence of the original families, who had come from London after the war and, in particular, the young women about whom the phrase ‘pram town’ was coined, was important in establishing a new regional dialect ‘it was the kids who extend on it’ (Int. 4 P2). She was aware that language constantly changes and belongs to the people who use it

and that generation and gender were significant influences in its development.

The prejudice that was shown to regional accents was still frequently related to social class. Student 10, who reported coming from a standard English speaking background, described her parents' prejudice towards a Northern English accent. 'We moved from South London to Yorkshire and my parents were very strict that I didn't pick up a Yorkshire accent.' She was told, 'That's not the proper way to speak. People judge you' (Int. 10 P1). The broad accent that her parents disapproved of was a working class accent. This student reported that the teachers in the private girls' school she attended did not have a Yorkshire accent. Again this relates to the aforementioned issue about social and political expectations of what it is to be a teacher, a significant issue for this research.

Student 3, like Student 2, recalled prejudice from a teacher, 'Originally I'm Canadian so when I came over here a teacher I always remember at the High School I started here said to me, "When are you going to lose that horrible accent?"' (Int. 3 P1). Having been displaced at an impressionable age, it was more important for this student to identify with her new country than to retain her national identity. 'I tried to then fit in with the norm of this country' (Int. 3 P2). This student had lived in Canada, England and New Zealand. It is difficult to determine her regional background from her accent now; it is non-localised.

The Ugandan student identified similar concerns voiced by the previous three students, 'It's all to do with trying to fit in, in the society, isn't it?' (Int. 5 P13). Her experience reflected other issues already identified. The right accent is necessary to get on, 'You may just teach your child to speak fluent English and without a trace of any foreign accent and your child might just get on in the world' (Int. 5 P14). She cites cousins whose parents were diplomats who 'rid themselves of their accents... they speak French, German and English and, although they are black, nobody thinks they are black, you see, because they are so good' (Int. 5 P14).

The prejudice shown in England towards inner city, Essex and Northern accents were mirrored in the Ugandan student's account of attitudes to

certain regional accents within Africa. Luo speakers in Kenya were looked down upon by Luo speakers in Uganda, ‘The accent is so, so heavy. It’s so heavy and the – this Luo in Uganda make a joke that those people, you know, they drink too much porridge. That’s why they speak – they speak with a really heavy accent and they tend to put ‘t’ in front of many words’ (Int. 5 P5).

Accent – issues of intelligence, race and gender

The connection between accent, non-standard dialect and intelligence was refuted on a rational level, although ‘intelligence’ and ‘education’ were often conflated. Six students acknowledged that it was a common but incorrect assumption to link accent to intelligence. Student 1 stated this view most explicitly, ‘I don’t think it necessarily means if somebody’s speaking in non-standard English with a cockney accent or something that they’re not intelligent’ (Int. 1 P10). The Ugandan student reported how her accent was linked to intelligence in people’s minds, ‘Because if you speak in your accent’ (Ugandan) ‘people usually think you are daft – you’re stupid’ (Int. 5 P15). The links made between accent and intelligence did not just reflect a racial or a one way hierarchical social perspective. For example, Student 7’s response to what she perceived as an upper class accent was, ‘I would make the same judgement as them... if I hear somebody speaking “*Oh yes*” and exaggerating like that, I, in my mind, think, “She’s probably as thick as two planks”’ (Int. 7 P5).

Student 6 recalled how her mother had corrected her daughter’s use of the glottal stop in the pronunciation of ‘butter’ so that she would ‘not sound common’, but also to speak properly showed you were ‘more intelligent’ (Int. 6 P2). This particular student was also admonished for not sounding ‘like a lady.’

Dialect

Students’ reference to dialect focussed primarily on vocabulary. The difficulties that I experienced in analysing students’ use of vocabulary in their interviews were reflected in the students’ discussions, which focussed on similar issues such as the use of colloquial words and phrases. These

issues are further discussed later in this chapter when students discuss their interaction with parents of the children they were teaching. There were two references to the use of ‘ain’t’, a linguistic feature that was viewed as unacceptable. Its unacceptability was related to a social evaluation of English, as this feature is often perceived as a characteristic of a class dialect.

Summary of students’ perceptions about spoken standard English

The difficulty of differentiating between geographical and social dialects and accents was apparent in the students’ accounts of their own attitudes and experiences. It would appear that despite social mobility, there are still stereotypical perceptions of accent. The students’ views support a common sociolinguistic perspective that prejudice towards linguistic features, including accent, is often indicative of the social divisions in society, rather than reflecting purely linguistic issues. These students’ perceptions of the status of standard and non-standard English are important because, as potential teachers, they will influence the way different varieties are treated in our education system.

Influences on spoken standard English

In this sub-section I discuss how students’ attitudes to standard English might have been acquired.

Early language experiences: home, school, peer group

The most frequently mentioned influence on spoken language was the home. Four students included reference to the extended family. For example R reported that her ‘grandma was a good model of language’. Student 8, who spent a lot of time in Essex with an aunt who ‘probably spoke more standard English than perhaps mum and dad did’ said that she ‘tended to follow her, rather than mum and dad.’ Interestingly, this student used the most non-standard constructions in her speech. Six students reported having their speech corrected at home. The examples they provided were for using ‘ain’t’ and accent features, such as the use of the glottal stop in the pronunciation of ‘butter’ (Int. 6 P2).

The language of their peer group, 'street talk' (Int. 7 P2), was another important influence. It was mentioned by all students to varying degrees. Student 7 recalled 'having no call' for standard English.

Only three students reported spoken standard English being taught at secondary school. This occurred in preparation for an oral for a CSE examination in a comprehensive school and in drama and elocution lessons for the two students who attended private schools. No students recollected being taught spoken standard English at Primary school. This is in direct contrast to the role spoken standard English now has in the Primary National Curriculum, an issue that I return to in Chapter 5.

To report that the students used the language of the class background they came from is an oversimplification, as their backgrounds were often complicated and it was difficult to categorise different influences. To illustrate the difficulty of interpreting the data, I give four examples below of the early experiences of four students, 2, 3, 5 and 10, who came from very different language backgrounds.

Student 2 identified the complexity of her own language history: coming from a large working class Irish family living in London, she spoke with an Irish accent with relatives and Irish friends and like a Londoner with her friends that lived locally. Her secondary school friends in Tooting were of West Indian origin and spoke with a different London accent to her, 'because I used to go to their houses, and they spoke differently to their parents, with a different accent. And then they had their London accent, that wasn't quite the same as my London accent' (Int. 2 P9). She said that her telephone voice was 'a mixed thing.' This student was aware of her ability to code switch from an early age, although she herself would not have used this term.

Student 3 who spent her childhood in three different countries did not view the variety of her language background positively. She spoke of battling with the difference between American and English vocabulary and being asked by a teacher in England when she was going to lose her horrible Canadian accent. She lived in the north of England and her mother, although from the north, was always correcting the accent and dialect her daughter

picked up from the street, because she wanted her to get on and felt that northern working class speech would hold her back. Her accent was non-localised now and there were no obvious dialect uses.

Student 5, like the previous two students, was able to operate in a range of language contexts from an early age. English was the language used for education because of colonialism. However, when this student was about twelve, Idi Amin came to power and everyone had to learn Swahili. This student was therefore operating in three languages, Luo, English and Swahili. She reported that although English was her second language, learning it as a foreign language enabled her to feel confident in speaking and writing standard English.

Student 10 also had a complex language background as a child. Like student 3 her education was disrupted. The family moved from South London to Yorkshire when she was seven. Her parents were prejudiced against the Yorkshire accent and dialect, which was seen as 'not proper'. They were 'very strict that [she] did not pick it up.' Her parents took her out of the state sector as she was bullied for not fitting in (this was partly to do with accent and her standard English dialect) and sent her to private school. It was a traditional all girls' school. 'It was very white.' She did not meet 'anyone who was of a different race.' Her perception was that all the teachers and pupils spoke standard English.

Post 16 experience

All the students referred to their experience in the work place when discussing the confidence in spoken English that they had now acquired. The range of jobs that they mentioned involved a lot of spoken language. They included working in a bank, reception work, telephone sales, office work, retail, nursing, nursery nursing, factory work, teaching and working in a primary school as a classroom assistant and a parent helper. It was interesting that these jobs were those that are often associated with women and require interpersonal skills.

Summary of influences on spoken standard English

The data would suggest that many students were operating in a range of language contexts from a very early age and would probably have been exposed to spoken standard English at school through various role models. However, no student recalled spoken standard English being directly taught at primary school and there was only one recollection of it being taught for an oral English examination in the state secondary system. It was, however, taught in the two private schools. As the pupils were already using this variety, this teaching was perhaps for social rather than educational reasons.

Although four students had encountered prejudice as a result of their accent, all students have been able to make the adjustments necessary to succeed in the work place. Code switching from standard to non-standard was seen as important as moving from non-standard to standard in some situations. All students reported that as they grew older and moved in different circles, they were able to adopt the appropriate form of language to suit the situation, although some perceived their own accent negatively.

Confidence in using and teaching spoken standard English

In the following sub-section I examine how the students *currently* position themselves as speakers of standard English and finally how they perceive their role in teaching this variety.

Personal identity

Five students who said that they came from non-standard English speaking backgrounds reported that they reverted to the language variety that they had grown up with, when they were at home or with friends from the local area, which suggested that they now used a different variety (possibly standard) some of the time. For these students, one from Essex and four from London, lack of regional mobility would appear to have resulted in 'informal maintenance' of accent and dialect, reflecting the values accorded to 'solidarity' and 'acceptance' characteristic of working class accents (Milroy 1980; Trudgill 1983; Honey 1997). D suggested, 'you automatically do it (use the language you have grown up with) because that's where

you've come from.' She alluded to 'comfort' and 'recognition of roots' as the benefits of reverting to her East End accent.

Register

The dilemma of how to speak and whether to adapt their accent when they went on school practice was mentioned by three students who came from what they described as a working class background. This was linked to the public's, the government's, the university's and the students' own perceptions of what it is to be a teacher or a 'professional.' As discussed throughout this thesis the various definitions of standard English, as exemplified in educational policy documents, privilege this form for social rather than linguistic reasons.

Four students indicated that it was an advantage to be able to use different forms of language in school. Student 1 mentioned that the ability to use non-standard English, by which she primarily meant choice of vocabulary and accent, was an advantage when dealing with some parents. 'You set them at ease and build up a better relationship, I think' (Int. 1 P11). One student mentioned that her response to a parent concerned about her child being bullied was to use a colloquial expression, 'Oh, I know how you feel, I've been there' (Int. 2 P19) rather than the more formal 'I've experienced that too.' This student had used an informal register to communicate effectively in interview and was now discussing those very issues relating to register and context that I drew out in my analysis of her spoken language. Her reflections, like the students in Ivanic's research (1998) provided useful information on why she spoke in a particular way. She commented on the teachers in her teaching practice school as being from out of the local area, saying that they didn't 'speak in the same way as local people do.' 'I'd say all of them use form – very formal English' (Int. 2 P17). Her response was to adapt her own speech both in the staff room and in the classroom. 'I adapt my accent or dialect, whatever you want to call it. I try to speak more formally...in the class, but not as formally as my teacher, it doesn't suit me, it doesn't feel right. And I don't feel I have to do that. I pronounce my words. I try to pronounce my words correctly. I don't think, I, I don't say "ain't"' (Int. 2 P18). Student 2 accepted that some non-standard uses were

unacceptable in certain situations, but was beginning to question a definition of standard English that accorded it prestige.

Spoken standard English and the National Curriculum

There was a general consensus among the students that it was important to give children experience of a variety of different speech contexts, perhaps reflecting the guidelines on *Speaking and Listening* in the National Curriculum. However, this did not necessarily entail correcting their non-standard usage, especially when the children were very young. Two students mentioned that the best way to fulfil the National Curriculum requirements for teaching spoken standard English with young children was to be a role model, 'I think that it's really important for me to be a good role model' (Int. 4 P18). Student 1 thought that it was 'important to speak in standard English to model it to the children... particularly in the schools I'm in, because it's not modelled outside... and I think they've got a right to hear the different uses of language' (Int. 1 P42). However, she qualified this with 'But I don't think we should make them speak like it. I think they've, you know, they, they can decide on that later on' (Int. 1 P42). As she had adapted her language in the work place, she was using her own experience to inform her opinions.

The issues surrounding teacher as a role model and how that is manifested through language and culture are particularly complex. One white student felt she was more attuned to the black children in her class through her own socio-economic background than their 'middle-class' black teacher. On the other hand the Ugandan student, when discussing the Ugandan refugees she taught, commented that 'the children were just so happy to see me that, you know, I come from Uganda – the Ugandan children it just made them feel so good' (Int. 5 P22).

Student 6 was in a conflict about whether she should correct children's spoken language. She did not want to put them off talking, but felt that they needed access to spoken standard English, 'so that in a different situation um that you know how to talk correctly but say you have to go to court or something and speak to the judge' (Int. 6 P15). Again this relates to issues

of register and context, but also reflects the status that standard English has as the official language of the state.

D believed it was important for children to acquire confidence in spoken standard English by doing presentations at school. Although she acknowledged the difficulties, she was in favour of correcting children's accent and dialect, 'because obviously it's nicer for people to speak well'. This was borne out of her perception of her own spoken language, 'because I wouldn't say I speak the Queen's English and, when I hear people speak well, I feel I would like to speak like that really. I feel they have more confidence.' X, who had been to private school, felt that 'children should be able to speak how they like, as long as they know how to bring it up where appropriate.'

Three students were concerned that incorrect pronunciation might affect spelling, despite modules in the universities stressing that English spelling is not phonetically regular. It would appear that the strong views about accent, discussed previously, influence some students' interpretation of the National Curriculum.

Summary of students' confidence in using spoken standard English

The students' experiences in the workplace and the social mobility they are now experiencing through embarking on a teacher training course have given some the confidence to select different registers and use what they perceive as spoken standard English when they feel it is appropriate. Five students felt it was important to retain their class/regional accent in some contexts. Their judgements about what children should be taught in school reflect the status of spoken standard English as the prestige variety and its associations with 'educatedness', as opposed to other varieties. Their perception of their role in promoting spoken standard English was primarily through acting as a role model, although four students would correct children's language. For three of these students this included correcting accent.

Perceptions of written standard English

In the next sub-section I examine students' attitudes to written standard English and how confident they feel about using it. I also consider how confident these students feel about their explicit knowledge of the grammar of written standard English, their confidence in teaching it and what may have influenced this.

Language, power and education

There was a consensus in students' perceptions of written standard English as the prestige variety. It was characterised by the correct use of grammar, punctuation and spelling. All students believed that competence in written standard English was necessary to achieve academically and to be successful in some careers. 'It is vital to be able to write standard English' (Int. 1 P6). Their own failure to achieve academically at school, their work experience and their experiences in Higher Education inform these experiences, as I illustrate in the following examples.

Written standard English was important in that 'it gives you power to do what you want' (Int. 10 P6). X echoed the views of Honey (1997) in that she felt that linguists were operating a double standard. She did not accept that non-standard dialects conform to different grammatical rules. 'Yeah I had this dispute with G (a tutor) the other day and I still maintain that it 'we was going' is grammatically incorrect and he says that nowadays it is actually counted as correct, a grammatical feature of a South Eastern dialect. Would he accept it in a written essay?' Their inability to agree was because they were referring to different grammars for syntactic analysis. The student's views reflect a prescriptive account of the grammar of standard English, while the tutor's views were reflecting a descriptive account of grammar. The tutor was attempting to describe how people speak rather than prescribing good usage. The implication of the tutor's model was that all dialects have potentially equal status.

Written standard English was referred to as 'book language' by one student (Int. 2 P22), suggesting a distinction between the language of school and the language of the home. This student believed that the alienation that she had

felt as a child at school, 'I'm not going to write a book...this is nothing to do with me' (Int. 2 P25), was not as prevalent today as a result of an increased emphasis on life-long learning. Her perception was that 'with a lot of parents now going back to college and university, children today are more likely to see the relevance of this formal written structure' (Int. 2 P27). This student appeared to be aware of the social and political functions of standard English as being instrumental in promoting social mobility.

Again, as with spoken standard English, lack of competence in written standard English denoted a lack of education or intelligence for one student who stated, 'It's like a reflection on how intelligent you are. Because where I used to work...I set the mail and I'd read some letters that people had written and you don't mean to and of course the English isn't good. You think O my God what kind of person is writing like that' (Int. 9 P3). The role of standard English in assisting clear communication was not explicitly mentioned by any of the students. The data did not reflect the arguments that have been put forward over the centuries about the need to fix the language to aid communication and avoid ambiguity, as discussed in Chapter 2, 'The Development of standard English'. The discussion centred on the social and political functions of standard English, rather than on clear communication.

Summary of students' perceptions of written standard English

The ability to write in standard English was seen as important by all students because of its association with being educated, rather than to ensure clear communication. In an increasingly literate society, competence in written standard English was seen as essential for advancement in the work place. Although most jobs that the students had experience of did not require the use of written standard English, they were moving into a profession where it is important. Although competence in written standard English was linked to empowerment, no reference was made of it as a medium to challenge the status quo.

Influences on written standard English

Factors that influence the students' perceptions of written standard English were embedded in the preceding paragraph. In the following account I explore how life experiences affected the students' confidence about their implicit and explicit knowledge (the grammar) of standard English.

Home, school, work

None of the students referred to their written English being discussed or corrected at home, although one student, D, remembered her mum testing her spelling homework. For some students, as previously mentioned, this was because of a lack of interest at home. The others may have neglected to mention it because school was seen as having a greater influence.

As has already been discussed, these students did not achieve academically at school for a variety of reasons. Five students mentioned the gap between their own spoken language and the formality of the written register, which they felt academic writing entailed. Student 4 felt it was important to be shown how to write in a way that was 'short and precise and straight to the point' (Int. 4 P13), as her own written style resembled the discursive nature of her speech. 'In my speech I could go on and on talking about something and so that is conveyed in my writing. I could go on and on and on and I'd have a great big sheaf this long...' (Int. 4 P13).

The influence of X's private education was particularly interesting. She felt that her school had failed her because of its assumption that all its pupils would rise to the top of the career ladder and not have to worry about 'secretarial skills' as 'you will have everyone to correct your errors underneath you.' She reported that the English language teaching in her select girls' boarding school had consisted of formal grammar exercises with very little essay writing. This has left her so lacking in confidence that she uses a computer for everything, even her college notes, so that she can use a grammar and spell check. She lacks confidence in her use of syntax and use of tenses. She reported that she was never taught to draft her work. She still does not draft her assignments.

Views on the benefits of grammar teaching in improving competence in written standard English varied. Most students based their opinions on their recollections of being taught to write in school. These experiences depended on where and when they were educated. Four students recalled decontextualised grammar teaching, 'writing out lists of nouns, adjectives, verbs' (Int. 2 P8). 'I was given paragraphs and you had to pick out verbs and stuff like that... I don't know if there was any great depth to it. Besides I don't remember any of it' (Int. 8 P5). Student 5, who was taught English as a foreign language in Uganda, spoke of 'very, very formal grammar teaching at primary school. Although this was English as a second language, she was adamant that formal grammar teaching 'helped a lot'. Several students stated that any grammatical knowledge they have has been acquired when learning a foreign language.

However, Interviewee 3 did not feel that explicit knowledge of grammatical terms improved creative writing. She emphasised the need for other aspects of the writing process to be encouraged and felt her creativity, even as an adult, was hampered, as she became 'bogged down so much by grammar and punctuation' (Int. 3 P18). She did not recollect having been taught to redraft and edit her own work, 'I was never taught that skill' (Int. 3 P18).

Three of the younger students, 4, 6 and 7 had no recollections of being taught grammar. Student 6 recalled English as 'either writing stories... or comprehension... Spellings were always indicated... and um punctuation' (Int. 6 P10). When these students were at state schools in the 1970's, the recommendations of Bullock were being implemented. A functional approach to language, based on a sociolinguistic model of language (Model 2), described in the literature review, was perhaps influencing both the curriculum and pedagogy that they were experiencing. They are now expected to be familiar with a structuralist model of language (Model 1) and the pedagogic practice, which often accompanies it. Student 9, an older student also had no recollection of grammar teaching. However, as mentioned earlier this evidence should be viewed with caution, as pedagogical practice may vary and an automatic correlation between decades and practice cannot be drawn. There is also the possibility that students' memories are not totally reliable.

The jobs that the students had engaged in, whilst improving their confidence in spoken English, entailed little opportunity for written work. Apart from three students R, D and 10, who had taken examinations in connection with their previous jobs, these students had little experience of formal writing in standard English before deciding to embark on Higher Education.

Summary of influences on written standard English

The students' recollections of influences on their ability to write in standard English focused primarily on their time in secondary school. The pedagogical practices they described varied, but generally school did not appear to have improved their confidence in their ability to write competently in standard English. Recollections of being taught grammar varied greatly, but only the student who learnt English as a foreign language at primary school in Uganda felt that it was beneficial.

For some students lack of confidence in written standard English when leaving school appears to have been exacerbated by lack of practice in the intervening years between school and completing an access course or other examinations.

Confidence in using and teaching written standard English

In order to see how students *currently* positioned themselves as writers of standard English and how knowledgeable they felt about its grammar I explored how they felt they were coping with the course, including their work in schools.

Most students indicated that they were finding the written demands of the course difficult. Five students mentioned the gap between their own spoken register and the formality of the written register, which was causing problems when they came to write their academic assignments. This has already been discussed in relation to the description and analysis of the quantitative data on students' written assignments. Their experiences reflected many of the issues explored by Ivanic (1998), such as the impersonal nature of much academic discourse, the difficulties in acquiring a new discourse and their lack of confidence as a result of previous educational experiences, which I discuss in Chapter 2.

There were some interesting points to emerge on the subject knowledge students were required to have as teachers, as a result of the introduction of Circulars 10/97 and 4/98. Students varied in their response to the extra modules that had been put on in the universities to bring their own subject knowledge up to the standard required for the award of Qualified Teacher Status. Even in the Essex study, before the subject knowledge as specified in Circular 10/97 was linked to the award of QTS, two of the Essex students, A and R, graphically described the demands made on them by the subject knowledge of English grammar in that document. R spoke of 'this big chasm' between last year's work and the current one. She reported that she kept 'going into panic mode.'

Four of the London students welcomed the modules, although two of these said that they found the content difficult. Student 10 felt that teachers needed the grammatical knowledge, specified in Circular 4/98, 'I think if we have our own knowledge and we're competent with it, then that can only work better in teaching the children' (Int. 10 P12). Another student felt that her newly acquired knowledge of terminology was enabling her to improve children's writing. She attributed this to the content of the university module, 'Understanding Language', emphasising a descriptive rather than a prescriptive account of language. 'It's not like, you know, when you're just saying like "This is a noun, this is a ---" but I'm understanding the sentence and the structures and the whys' (Int. 7 P13). She was translating her new knowledge into teaching methods, which enabled children to use a metalanguage to discuss their writing.

Only three of the students thought the new knowledge was not relevant. Student 8 who lacked explicit knowledge of grammar felt even more deskilled as a result of the course. Previously, she had enjoyed reading and creative writing but 'From being able to read a book and understanding it...I'd be trying to write in the text and I'm now sort of thinking "Oh God, what's that sentence? Is it a clause or is it a phrase?"' (Int. 8 P16).

Students' lack of confidence in their explicit knowledge of grammar and their ability to spell and punctuate affected their confidence to teach English at K S 2. Student 4 was 'nervous'. She was worried that she would 'inflict a

bad habit' (Int. 4 P14) by not recognising children's errors, because she found it hard herself. Her views were echoed by six of the students, although two of these felt they could 'look it up.'

Written standard English and the National Curriculum

All students believed that pupils needed to be able to write competently in standard English and that their role as teachers was significant. However, the arguments about the importance of teaching grammar and transcription skills and whether this stifled creativity, which have been the subject of educational debate during the twentieth century (refer to Chapter 2), were still evident when students discussed current teaching methods.

Pedagogy was a central concern for these students. The role of the teacher in interpreting government requirements was high on their agenda, as they were in the vanguard of the changes occurring in the classroom. The importance of motivating children was emphasised, perhaps as a result of their own experiences and lack of academic success at the end of compulsory schooling. There was concern about the return to decontextualised grammar teaching, even in Primary School, in the way the National Literacy Strategy was being interpreted. A newly qualified teacher had been observed by one student saying, 'Today we're doing adverbs' (Int. 2 P29). Another student, although not opposed to the National Literacy Strategy 'as long as you're sort of fairly creative' (Int. 8 P15) was concerned about some of the practice she was observing in schools. 'A lot of the teachers that I see in school, they're following the examples (in the National Literacy Strategy) and you know they're churning out the stuff and from that point of view it's gonna come out of context' (Int. 8 P15).

Many of the students were against a transmission model of teaching as a result of their own experience. One felt that grammar needed to be taught 'But make it their learning rather than you telling them' (Int. 2 P31). There was a degree of optimism, despite the prescriptive content of the National Literacy Strategy and this was to do with methodology, 'I mean teaching now, well hopefully, we are all teaching in a much more hands on, creative way' (Int. 9 P8). The students' views about making learning fun are important, as they have been formulated out of their own experience of

being disaffected at school. 'I didn't want to be there' (Int. 9 P5). They are aware of how important it is for education to be relevant. Although none of the students advocated a return to decontextualised grammar teaching, their views differed as to when and whether it was appropriate to introduce terminology at an early age. One student, who was in favour, stated, 'You know they pick it up, they'll know what it means if you teach it properly' (Int. 4 P12).

Relationship between competence, confidence and perceived needs

Despite the evidence that suggests that, apart from a few non- standard constructions and one or two specific errors in punctuation, most students can communicate effectively in written English, the majority of students lacked confidence in their prowess as competent language users. For a significant number of these students, it was lack of explicit knowledge of grammar and lack of exposure to particular types of academic discourse that made them feel deskilled.

Students' perceptions of what they needed to know to teach written standard English effectively was influenced by the new government initiatives. For many of the students the difference between their own educational backgrounds and the new subject knowledge requirements resulted in them feeling deskilled, not only in their own use of written English but in their ability to teach it at KS2.

Pedagogic skills were considered to be an important factor for effective teaching, although the students' perceptions of what they considered to be effective methods varied.

CONCLUSION

I now draw together the main findings in relation to my research questions, before relating them in the concluding chapter to the theoretical framework underpinning the research and considering the implications for policy and practice.

My data collection alerted me to several misconceptions that I held prior to starting this research. By targeting non-traditionally qualified students rather

than students generally, I was without fully realising it coming from deficit view of the language needs of these students. In addition to this I had not given due consideration to the fact that in relation to exploring confidence about their knowledge of language, there might be students who were so lacking in confidence that they would not wish to be part of my sample.

The difficulty of defining spoken standard English influenced the interpretation of the data in relation to competence in the use of spoken standard English. However, working within a definition that recognised a core of grammatical constructions and the use of non-regional vocabulary, the data revealed that, in a semi-formal interview, the students were able to use an informal register of spoken standard English, apart from a limited number of non-standard constructions. These did not hinder communication. The range of non-standardised constructions reflected the most common uses identified in previous research studies (Hughes and Trudgill 1979) and perhaps point to 'the development of a standardising variety of non-standard English' (Milroy and Milroy 1993). The most effective communication occurred when students were able to draw upon the richness of their language backgrounds to code switch effectively, taking account of audience.

Those students who came from a non-standard English speaking background had overcome negative reactions to their accent and dialect as a result of increasing social mobility. They felt confident that they were now able to select different registers and use what they perceived as spoken standard English when appropriate. However, their perception of spoken standard English as the prestige variety and its association with professionalism led them to believe that they should use standard English to provide a role model for the children that they would teach.

A significant finding was the students' perception of accent as a prime indicator of the social status accorded to standard English as a result of their own experiences, despite statements to the contrary in educational policy documents. This is indicative of the different interpretations that people put on definitions of standard English that ostensibly focus on linguistic features, but that operate in a social and political context.

The interpretation of the data relating to students' competence in using written standard English, using the QCA framework, did not reveal the reasons behind the choices that the students made, which is important when considering the support they may require. The fact that there were fewer errors in the personal writing than in their academic assignments suggests that these students had difficulty with the more formal written register demanded by the university.

Students' implicit knowledge of grammar as demonstrated in their writing was more secure than their explicit knowledge as demonstrated through their audits, yet the majority of students lacked confidence in their ability to write in standard English. This appeared to result from lack of academic achievement at school and lack of opportunity to write in standard English in their subsequent working life. The social mobility that had improved their confidence as speakers had not impacted on their confidence as writers.

The significant number of errors in punctuation in students' writing primarily related to the use of the comma splice and the apostrophe. The use of the comma splice appeared to reflect the pauses that would occur in speech, rather than grammatical boundaries, again suggesting that these students were more comfortable with the spoken mode. Interestingly, students' explicit knowledge of spelling and punctuation rules was better than their application of them, suggesting that they may have the knowledge required to implement the National Curriculum. It is possible that in their own writing where they are grappling with content, transcription skills take second place. This might also explain why there were fewer errors in their personal writing as compared to their academic assignments. From the students' perspective the ability to spell and punctuate is linked to 'being educated', as much as to being able to communicate effectively.

The students' perceptions that competence in written standard English is essential to climb the economic ladder were reinforced in their experiences of gaining access to Higher Education and coping with the demands of the course. Their confidence in their ability to write effectively in standard English was already low when they came onto the course because of previous negative educational experiences. They were then confronted in

the university with a model of language that emphasised the importance of explicit knowledge of grammatical rules, which most felt had been lacking in their own education, and which would not necessarily improve their written competence.

Although students wanted to improve their own knowledge of grammar, either to improve their confidence or in the belief that it would improve their writing, they had reservations about whether and how grammar should be taught in primary school. Their own secondary education and their experiences on school practice made them wary of advocating grammar teaching out of context or using a transmission model of teaching.

The implications of the relationship between competence and confidence in using language and how this is influenced by the promotion of one variety through the education system, without which access to the power base of society is denied, is further discussed in the concluding chapter.

In this chapter I revisit the key issues underpinning the research, namely *linguistic diversity, inclusive education and government policy* with reference to students from non-traditional pathways who are training to be teachers. I relate any significant findings in these areas to the research findings, theory and educational policy and practice discussed in Chapter 2 and I assess the contribution this small research project makes to existing knowledge in the areas under investigation. I critically evaluate the research tools that I used to gather my data and suggest ways that they might have been improved. I also identify important issues that have emerged from the data that I feel warrant further investigation. Finally I discuss the implications of my research for educational policy and practice and suggest possible forums for the dissemination of my findings.

A challenge of this research project was to work within a definition of standard English that would enable me to explore students' competence in both the spoken and written forms, as well as exploring how they positioned themselves as users of this variety. This entailed analysing concrete linguistic features on the one hand and then exploring the issues of status, which underpin its use in different educational and political forums. The data that I have collected draws upon both the linguistic and the social/political dimensions of spoken standard English, through the experience of a group of student teachers.

The difficulty of analysing students' use of spoken standard English was compounded by the differences between spoken and written discourse, which had been a contentious issue when the National Curriculum (1995) had been produced (Perera 1994). In practice, my definition of it as a variety characterised by its choice of vocabulary and conventions of grammar meant that I was still working with a deficit model of language, as I was looking for examples of the absence of these constructions. The problem was further compounded because of the problems of deciding whether particular words and expressions, characteristic of an informal register, were acceptable, and in which contexts.

Although problems related to the differences between spoken and written standard English had been the subject of lengthy consultation four years earlier, Circular 4/98, with its requirement that students demonstrate spoken standard English at interview for acceptance onto teacher training, was introduced without debate. The difficulties that I identified when analysing the data from the semi-formal interviews that I carried out would apply when deciding whether a student satisfied the entry requirement (*Annex I 1.1.1*) of Circular 4/98. The implications of my findings are that this criterion would be almost impossible to apply with any degree of consistency.

If, on the other hand, the purpose behind this requirement relates to the prestige status of this variety, whereby the constructions that are stigmatised are related to class (Trudgill 1983; Perera 1994) and easily identifiable, there are significant issues related to broadening access. Most institutions recognise the needs of students with a physical disability or a hearing or visual impairment. To encourage institutions to deny access to students who use a spoken non-standard dialect characteristic of a class background would appear to marginalise students who missed opportunities earlier on in their lives. This is in opposition to this government's avowed commitment to broadening access.

As well as the problems that I have identified in connection with the linguistic data, complex issues relating to the status of standard English were raised and discussed by the students in relation to their own previous experience in the work place and at home. These students reported that they had experienced prejudice in the workplace because of their accent rather than their dialect, reflecting Honey's argument that non-standard constructions are more stigmatised when spoken in some accents (Honey 1989). This is a factor that would need to be considered when discussing students' performance at interview.

My research would not support the view that children should be formally taught to speak standard English at Primary school and that teachers should correct children's spoken language. The students in my sample for whom standard English was not the dominant variety adapted their speech patterns,

if they deemed it necessary, to advance in the workplace. They added spoken standard English to their repertoire. Similarly, students who reported coming from a standard English background adapted their speech to fit in with the different social groups they encountered. If teachers made negative comments about the students' dialect and accent, the data suggests that the students' confidence was affected, rather than their speech patterns changing. This has implications for the status ascribed to spoken standard English in the National Curriculum (1999). This issue is not included in the implications for practice as this research is primarily concerned with students' needs rather than pupils.

Contrary to the notion, often reported in the media, that many students' writing is grammatically incorrect, my findings reflected the research findings of the QCA Technical Accuracy Project 1999 on writing at Key Stage 3 and 4. Two thirds of the scripts in that study offered no non-standard English constructions. My data too revealed relatively few non-standard features, the most frequent being the non-standard use of prepositions. This is interesting when related to the historical development of change in what is seen as non-standard use, which I discussed in Chapter 2 with particular reference to the use of prepositions in Jane Austen's writing. The QCA Report links some non-standard uses of prepositions to 'informality of register in writing' and 'using the characteristics of spoken standard English' (QCA 1999, p.19). As spoken English changes across time and place this would account for the frequency of this feature.

The other main errors that occurred in the students' writing were the misuse or omission of punctuation marks; the most common being the use of the comma splice, again reflecting the findings from the QCA data. I would also link this use to students' self-identified difficulties in differentiating between the spoken and written register. My data reveals that they are, in many instances, writing as they would speak and using the comma to separate ideas that are closely linked but require a more emphatic grammatical boundary. This is interesting when compared to the development of punctuation and its purpose, as discussed in the literature review. In many instances the comma splice does not hinder communication. Its use may signify a lack of education, which relates as

much to the political function underlying the definition of standard English as to the linguistic one.

Although the students did not use many non-standard constructions, the data collected from interviews with the students suggest that they have a deficit view of their written language. This has been exacerbated by the grammatical knowledge that they are required to demonstrate in order to achieve Qualified Teacher Status. The literature I reviewed on the teaching of grammar (Cameron 1997) illustrated the difficulty of relating the teaching of grammar to improved competence in writing. My findings additionally suggest that the grammatical knowledge the students are required to demonstrate in an audit is not necessarily reflected in their writing. However, the students felt disadvantaged by their lack of grammatical knowledge, as it was knowledge valued by influential groups in society. This relates to their perception of the standard English as the prestige variety.

The students chosen for my sample had benefited from the expansion of Higher Education and the more flexible routes into teacher training. Since they have come onto the courses, Circular 4/98 with its requirement that students demonstrate spoken and written standard English at interview, coupled with the high level of explicit knowledge of the grammar of standard English that they must demonstrate to achieve QTS, has been introduced. This document has come at a time of restricted funding and a reduction in the number of hours that students must spend in the university. It has exacerbated the anxieties of students and confirmed the students' perceptions of their language skills as inferior.

My findings suggest that the tension that was identified in the introduction between the government's pledge to broaden access to teacher training and the policy emphasis on spoken and written standard English is still being played out as we move into the 21st century and may deter some students from applying to come on the course. It is not my intention to deny the importance of providing necessary support for students with particular language needs or underdeveloped study skills, but to question the ethics of suggesting that access should be denied to students who use a non-standard

dialect, which the majority of linguists would deny is inferior to standard English. Moreover, to demand knowledge of explicit, prescriptive grammatical rules, which is not necessarily related to improving their competence in writing and confirms students' sense of inadequacy appears counterproductive at a time of teacher shortage.

CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODS USED WITHIN THE STUDY

In Chapter 3 I provided a detailed rationale for the choice of research methods and procedures that I employed and, at the beginning of Chapter 4, I recounted how I carried out my investigations. Because of the developmental nature of the research process, I included some evaluation of my research methods and explained how these were refined as a result of the pilot study and in the light of further reading. In this section I evaluate how effective those tools were in providing me with the data I needed and how with hindsight they might have been refined still further. I also consider areas that relate to both studies that I have not yet evaluated.

Size of sample

I acknowledge that I have used a relatively small sample of fourteen students. However, the research was intended to explore the students' individual life stories to illustrate the complexity of their backgrounds, which might influence their needs, as well as collecting actual linguistic data. I wanted to find out whether current educational policies adequately address not only the diversity of language needs but how it affects students' confidence. I therefore feel that the numbers were appropriate.

Semi- structured Interviews

The primary aim of this research when it was first conceived was to provide the students with a voice in the increasingly political debate about their language needs. The use of semi-structured interviews to gain an insight into students' perspectives was an appropriate tool. It enabled me to focus on identified areas, whilst allowing me the flexibility to develop emerging themes. However, as I was not skilled in conducting interviews of this nature, I allowed some students to spend a disproportionate amount of time

discussing issues that were not strictly related to standard and non-standard English. With hindsight I would have planned for a second interview to clarify issues that were not always fully developed. I feel that the decision to change the interview structure as a result of progressive focusing on standard English was appropriate, but it did mean that there was a lack of information from some students in some areas.

In writing up the data I felt compelled to look for similarities in the students' experiences, despite my intention to allow the individual voices come through by incorporating the raw data in the form of liberal amounts of transcription of students' responses. It was not until I was attempting to write up the data that I recognised the complexity of interpreting the individual language histories. If I were presenting the data now, I would adopt a case study approach to enable the reader to relate more easily the examples of non-standard language use to the people who used them and compare the relationship between each individual's spoken and written language.

The decision to move beyond the personal life stories and use the interviews to provide data on students' use of spoken language was made before I fully realised the difficulty of defining spoken standard English data and the importance of register. Examples of students' use of spoken language in other situations, especially in school, would have shown how successful they were in adapting their language in different situations rather than relying on their account of their ability to do this. The students' reluctance to allow their school practice to be used as data was linked to the anxieties they felt about achieving the standards of Circular 4/98 and had to be respected. A positive outcome of respecting their decision was that the interviewees were very open and frank in their discussions with me and the data was a rich source of information on their perspectives.

A major theme to emerge from the data was the importance of accent, which was not part of a linguistic definition of 'standard English'. I chose to discuss the references to it in the analysis of the students' definitions, as it was often conflated with dialect. The influence that accent has on our perception of non-standard dialects is an area that I have become

increasingly interested in after reviewing the literature (e.g. Honey 1989; Trudgill 1983) and considering the social and political purposes underpinning the definitions of standard English in the National Curricula for schools and teacher training institutions. I would like to focus on accent use in a further study. Another possible research area is the role 'register' plays in attempts to define spoken standard English. I am also interested in issues surrounding 'positive' and 'deficit' models of language in testing students' competence in using language.

Frameworks for investigating competence in and knowledge about written standard English.

I developed and refined a coding frame to examine students' use of non-standard vocabulary and grammar and errors in punctuation and spelling in their writing. Halfway through the research, I was influenced in my presentation and analysis of the data by the Technical Accuracy Project (QCA 1999). If I were to carry out similar research I would follow the study more closely and investigate 'usage of linguistic features rather than just analysing errors' (QCA 1999 p.3), as I felt my analysis reinforced the students' perceptions of non-standard English as a deficit model of language. Again with hindsight, I feel that I could have incorporated ideas from Ivanic (1998), where she questioned students' about their literacy practices. It would have been useful to ask students to explain why they used non-standard vocabulary, grammar or punctuation. This could have provided additional information about the type of support that they might need and how confidence in spoken language might be used to improve writing. Although outside my remit in this project, this might include considering whether academic essays could be written effectively in different styles, drawing upon positive aspects of non-standard usage.

The possible effect of word-processing on the students' academic writing has already been mentioned. I should have collected information on the word- processing packages that they were using, as these vary in degrees of sophistication. This could then have been acknowledged in the interpretation of the data. I tried to take account of the impact of IT by collecting hand-written extracts, but these were much shorter extracts and

required a different register. Also the London students wrote their pieces in a test situation. The difficulty I had in collecting data reflected the pressure students were already under. They did not have the time to do extra work outside their course work. In analysing the written work I was conscious that the evidence was limited as it reflected their performance on two occasions only. However, as I knew the students' work I felt that it was a fair representation of their ability.

The data on students' explicit knowledge of grammar in the audit only provided evidence on the knowledge that the papers tested. I decided to use the audit information as the students had identified their concerns about the tests. The findings have implications when considering the appropriateness of the national standardised tests were being introduced from September 2000, an issue that I return to when I consider the implications for policy towards the end of this chapter.

Developmental issues

The relationship between the pilot study and the main study has already been discussed in Chapters 3 and 4. The additional comment I would make is that my increased awareness of what I perceived as the political and social purposes behind the ostensible linguistic definitions of standard English in the policy documents influenced my interpretation of the data and the subsequent construction of knowledge. Moreover, as the range of data that I collected was slightly different in each study the research findings were difficult to write up. I originally presented the reports separately, but I felt that there was a lot of repetition, so I revisited the data and combined the analysis where I felt it to be appropriate and incorporated new insights.

Main strengths of the research methods

Although there were limitations to the data, I consider that one of the strengths of using both qualitative and quantitative research methods was that it explored the relationship between perceived and actual needs, an area that was identified in the original research proposal. Other researchers have considered the competence of students or pupils, or explored life histories. The additional contribution my small research project makes to research in

these areas is to combine the two approaches to explore students' confidence and competence. By deconstructing the various definitions of standard English, I was able to examine the linguistic features of students' language and explore the students' understanding of the social and political functions of standard English. I was providing them with a voice in the educational debate of which they are a focus.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL POLICY

A central question underpinning this research project is: 'What are the implications for government policy on access to teacher education of its policy emphasis on intending teachers' command of spoken and written standard English?' I cannot directly address the issue as the size of my sample was small and I was working with students who were already on the course. However, my findings do shed some light on it and are indicative of an answer rather than providing a definitive one. If possible future recruits feel that their language background is not valued and have as little confidence as these students of mine in their command of written English, then they may be deterred from applying for places on teacher training courses. This will make it more difficult for the government to achieve an adequate supply of teachers at a time of national shortage. They may lose potential positive role models whom pupils might identify with in inner city areas such as London.

Current directives from the Teacher Training Agency who control funding are that institutions must ring fence places for recruits in shortage subjects, such as science and mathematics, and for under-represented groups, such as men in nursery education. Whether institutions will apply the criteria fairly in relation to spoken and written standard English, when trying to meet their target numbers, remains to be seen.

My findings lead me to conclude that:

- The requirement that students demonstrate the ability to use spoken standard English at interview should be removed when Circular 4/98 is revised, as this research suggests that it is impossible to implement with any degree of consistency.

- Every effort should be made by those interested in raising standards to move away from a simplistic evaluation of students' subject knowledge through computerised, multiple choice tests, such as the basic skills test that has been introduced, and to ensure that learning support mechanisms are funded that recognise the power and potential of language in all its forms.
- The revised ITT Curriculum should reflect a descriptive model of grammar and be linked to pedagogy. This would empower students by giving them access to a knowledge of grammar that they feel they have been excluded from. It would also enable them to provide pupils with a metalanguage for discussing their own or others work.

IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Again my findings provide indicative answers rather than definitive solutions.

Addressing students' needs

Spoken English

- The data suggests that students would benefit from taught modules *exploring the differences and similarities between spoken and written English*. They should be given the opportunity to reflect upon the social and political status of standard English. They need to be made aware of the non-standard features of their own dialect and to have the opportunity to practise speaking in various forums; this could be accomplished through course assessment including more spoken presentations, the opportunity for role-play situations and self- assessment using tape recordings. The value of being able to code switch should be recognised in relation to establishing relationships and providing role models.

Written English

- Prior to the course, institutions should carry out a needs assessment, which acknowledges the positive aspects of students' language histories in order to improve their confidence.

- Students should be encouraged to undertake a diagnostic analysis of their writing at the beginning of each academic year to enable them to identify both positive linguistic features and significant errors and misconceptions in their use of grammar and punctuation. Tutorial support should be provided for those who need it.
- The effect of technology on written competence and its role in the foreseeable future should be evaluated and reflected in the assessment of students' written assignments.
- Students who come on ITT courses, such as a B Ed, with little experience of written academic discourse should be provided with additional modules, which support them in broadening their own language repertoire and moving from informal to more formal written structures.

Audience for the research

This research should be of interest to fellow professionals in the field of education. I have disseminated its findings at a research seminar for staff in my own institution this year and hope to present it as a paper at the annual British Educational Research Association conference in 2002.

I have shared the research process and the findings with the final year B Ed students to help them with their own research projects that were part of their course. I have also used some of the material with PGCE students in their session on language varieties.

SUMMARY

This research has provided indicative answers to complex questions on the relationship between language diversity, inclusive education and government policy on recruiting teachers in the new millennium. Its strength has been to analyse students' use of standard English and discover their views about its status to inform the political and educational debate about standards in education and the position of standard English within that system.

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APPENDIX 1 Definitions

STANDARD ENGLISH AND OTHER LINGUISTIC TERMS

Definitions from linguists

Standard English is ‘a non regional dialect used as a model for educated written usage’ (Finch 1998 p.233).

Standard English is ‘a prestige variety, used as an institutionalised norm in a community’ (Crystal 1995 p.459).

Spoken standard English is ‘spoken by educated native speakers; does not contain features that are widely stigmatised by educated native speakers’ Perera (1994). The ‘social shibboleths’ she referred to reflected the non-standard constructions of written standard English and included negative forms, e.g. I didn’t want no-one to hurt nobody; verb forms , e.g. They was laughing; pronouns and determiners, e.g. I want them books.

Definitions in policy documents

National Curriculum 1995

- standard English is distinguished from other forms of English by its vocabulary, and by rules and conventions of grammar, spelling and punctuation;
- the grammatical features that distinguish standard English include how pronouns, adverbs and adjectives should be used and how negatives, questions and verb tenses should be formed; such features are present in both the spoken and written forms, except where non-standard forms are used for effect or technical reasons;
- differences between the spoken and written forms relate to the spontaneity of speech and its function in conversation, whereas writing is more permanent, often carefully crafted, and less dependent on immediate responses;

- spoken standard English is not the same as Received Pronunciation and can be expressed in a variety of accents.

National Curriculum 1999

KS2 Speaking and Listening

When teaching standard English it is helpful to bear in mind the most common non-standard usages in England:

- subject-verb agreement (they was)
- formation of past tense (have fell, I done)
- formation of negatives (ain't)
- formation of adverbs (come quick)
- use of demonstrative pronouns (them books)

National Literacy Strategy (1998)

'[T]he Framework covers the statutory requirements for reading and writing in the National Curriculum for English and contributes substantially to the development of *Speaking and Listening*' (p.3).

By Year 5 pupils should be taught:

Grammatical awareness

to understand the basic conventions of standard English and consider when and why standard English is used:

- agreement between nouns and verbs;
- consistency of tense and subject;
- avoidance of double negatives;
- avoidance of non-standard dialect words (p.44).

As part of all courses, trainees must demonstrate that they know and understand:

a. the nature and role of standard English as the medium through which all subjects are taught and as the general, public English used to communicate within the United Kingdom and throughout the English-speaking world (p.43).

b.vi the grammar of spoken and written English (to enable them) to contribute to pupils' acquisition of standard English in speech and writing (p.45).

The Technical Accuracy Project QCA (1999)

standard English- the language of public communication, distinguished from other forms of English by its vocabulary, and by rules and conventions of grammar, spelling and punctuation. It contrasts with dialect, archaic forms and other forms of standard English, such as American/Australian English (p.58).

These definitions from the policy documents make little distinction between written standard English and spoken standard English, terms that I use throughout this study.

'Lay' definitions from student teachers.

All students perceived standard English as the prestige variety:

'It gives you power' (Interview 10).

It was commonly linked to intelligence or education;

'It's like a reflection on how intelligent you are' (Interview 9).

Similar shibboleths were identified:

'I still maintain that 'we was going' is grammatically incorrect' (Interview X).

Definitions of other linguistic terms

I have included definitions of the other key terms to clarify how I am using them in this dissertation. The definitions of the following words are adapted from the glossary of *How to Study Linguistics* (G Finch 1998), unless otherwise indicated.

Grammar

- 1) The study of syntax
- 2) An account of the rules governing linguistic behaviour with particular reference to phonology, syntax and semantics

The terms *descriptive grammar* and *prescriptive grammar* are also used to describe syntactic analysis. A prescriptive grammar attempts to *prescribe* what individual grammarians consider to be good usage. These rules, often based on a Latin model are set out in traditional grammar books. Modern syntactic analysis on the other hand attempts to *describe* how people actually do speak. 'Its main aim is to describe and explain the patterns of usage which are found in all varieties of the language, whether they are socially prestigious or not' (Crystal 1995 p.366). This distinction is important in the discussion of the status of standard English, which is a significant element of this research.

Dialect

A regional, or social, variety of the language with distinct syntactic forms and vocabulary items.

Accent

Features of pronunciation, which show regional or social variation.

Register

A socially defined style of language often used to distinguish different degrees of formality in communication.

The following definitions of two terms related to informality of register are taken from the Oxford Modern English Dictionary (1995):

Colloquialism

A word or phrase belonging to ordinary or familiar conversation, not formal or literary.

Slang

Words, phrases and uses that are regarded as very informal and are often restricted to special contexts or are peculiar to a special profession, class, etc.

DEFINITIONS OF NON-LINGUISTIC TERMS

Two other non-linguistic terms, which are used throughout this thesis, are clarified below:

Student

I have chosen to use the term *students* to refer to those studying to become teachers rather than *trainees*. This is a political decision, as I believe teaching is about education and not just training which the term *trainee* would seem to imply. However, I have kept the terms *trainee* and *training* where they are used in policy documents.

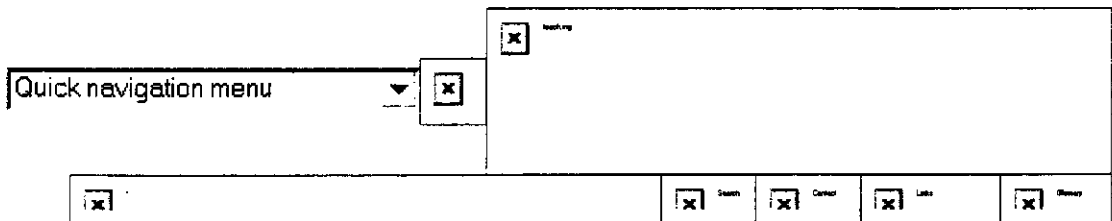
Non-traditional pathways/non-traditionally qualified

I use these terms to refer to students who have not entered Higher Education straight from school with two or more 'A' levels. I recognise the terms are almost redundant now, as there are an increasing number of pathways into Higher Education and a move towards lifelong learning. This issue is further discussed in Chapter 2 where I discuss access issues and in chapter 4 where I provide contextual information on the students.

APPENDIX 2 Teacher Training Agency Websites

www.educationlimited.co.uk 27/09/2000

www.canteach.gov.uk 16/09/2001



What are the basic requirements?

>What do I need to be a teacher?

>Which subject could I teach?

>What age-range could I teach?

>What work experience do I need?

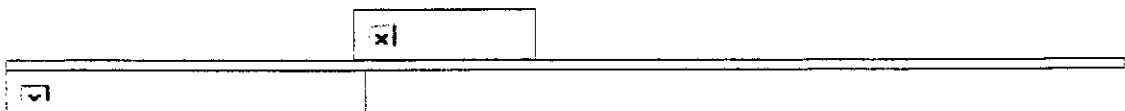
>What other requirements are there?

>I'm not sure if I'm ready to train - what should I do?

To enter an ITT programme, you must have at least a grade C in GCSE English and Mathematics or have reached the equivalent standard. If you were born on or after 1 September 1979 and want to teach primary pupils you will also need at least a GCSE grade C (or the equivalent) in a Science subject.

It is up to ITT providers to decide whether you meet the required standard in these subjects. Some set their own English and Mathematics tests for people without formal qualifications. Other qualifications that will usually be acceptable include GCE O-level or CSE grade 1 in the relevant subjects, vocational qualifications whose content is equivalent to Level 7 of the National Curriculum in the subject concerned, and the International and European Baccalaureates.

Whether you wish to train as a primary or secondary teacher, you will need to show how your previous education has provided you with the foundation to teach the subject in which you intend to specialise. There are no statutory requirements for subject qualifications. ITT providers set their own requirements when looking at your A-levels, degree or other educational qualifications to decide if it would be appropriate for them to train you to teach your chosen subject. Further information on the subject knowledge you are likely to require is listed by training route.



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Those who have

FAQs, e-mail advice & events

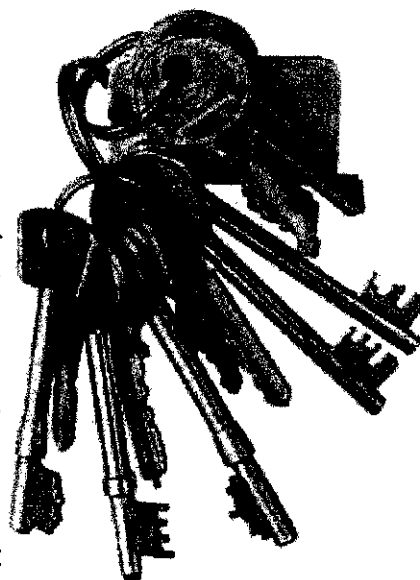
The next steps

TTA Homepage

How do I get in?

A few words on QTS.

These are three letters which hold immense professional significance. To work as a teacher in maintained schools and non-maintained special schools in England and Wales, you need Qualified Teacher Status (QTS). You can only get it by successfully completing Initial Teacher Training (ITT). Whichever route into teaching you choose, you'll need to meet the same QTS standards.



Making the grades.

To be eligible for an ITT programme, you'll need to complete a degree (or equivalent) either before, or as part of, your training. You'll also need at least a Grade C in GCSE English and mathematics (or equivalent). If you're considering teaching primary or middle school pupils and were born on or after 1st September 1979, you'll also need at least a Grade C in a GCSE science subject (or equivalent). In addition, ITT providers (the universities, colleges and schools who provide the training) decide their own entry standards. They will look at your educational qualifications and interview you to decide if they will train you to teach. In your interview, ITT providers will want you to demonstrate that you've had some relevant experience with children. They will look for evidence that you have what it takes to work and communicate effectively with young people.

APPENDIX 3 Guide for semi-structured interviews

Essex Interviews

Questions used with students A and R

What do you already know about language; what are your strengths?

What do you know about spoken/written English?

What has influenced that?

Home, school, college?

Probe on relationship between subject knowledge and application.

What do you want pupils to be able to do?

Adaptations in the light of first two interviews

Used with students D and X

At the beginning of the interview.

What do you know about spoken/written English?

What do you think the term standard English means?

Is there a difference between spoken and written standard English?

Then continue as before.

London Interviews

Adaptations in light of Essex data

Used with all London students

At the beginning of the interview.

Can you define spoken/written standard English?

Then continue as before and progress to.

Home

What was the attitude at home to spoken English?

What was the attitude at home to written English?

Points from my own reflections

- A good standard of written and spoken English are necessary to get on
- Encouragement to do homework but no pressure.

Parents lacked confidence in their own ability (no formal qualifications).

School

Tell me how English was taught at your Primary School?

What did you do?

How did you feel about it?

Why?

Points from my own reflections

- Emphasis on read and writing.
- Solitary activities
- Whole class instruction in class of forty-four.
- Practice for eleven plus.
- Success.

Secondary School

Tell me about your experiences of learning about language at secondary school.

Points from my own reflections

- Grammar School – culture shock – awareness of accent.

- Spoken English lessons.
- Language and Literature taught separately.
- Language teaching reinforced through foreign language teaching – French, German, Spanish, and Latin especially.
- Homework.
- Literature – value judgements encouraged – there was good and bad.
- Influence of teachers.
- Practice for O Levels.
- Acceptance for A Level – appreciation of language through literature encouraged.

Work experience

Tell me about your experiences in the workplace. Did you need to use spoken/written standard English?

The present

How confident do you feel about your spoken English?

Are there any contexts when it becomes an issue?

How confident do you feel about your written English?

Are there any aspects which you find problematical?

Points from my own reflections

- Success and continuing education breeds confidence.

The future

How confident do you feel about teaching spoken English?

How confident do you feel about teaching written English?

APPENDIX 4 Life Stories

- ‘- life stories are accounts of individual experience, accounts that may be very different from the perceptions of another observer;
- life stories may bring together, through the subjective experience of one person, strands of thought that tend to be studied separately by researchers;
- life stories may record occurrences that are regarded as unimportant by the researcher and illustrate the inadequacies of certain techniques.’

‘[Life stories] are transmitted orally and can, therefore, draw from a much larger proportion of the population than that literate articulate section that is able to write an autobiography. In particular, life stories can be a means of reaching working-class people who cannot or do not wish to write.’

‘Life stories also have an immediacy which autobiographies lack. In particular, the person collecting the life story may ask the respondent certain questions or generally indicate the kinds of subject they would like to see talked about. Life stories can, therefore, ‘fill the gap’ that the documentary source of the autobiography leaves.’

Advantages of Life Stories (Purvis 1987 p.74, p.75).

APPENDIX 5 Extracts from interviews to show development of methodology

Extract from first Essex interview – Student A

Extract from third Essex interview – Student D

Extract from fourth London interview – Student 4

Extract from eighth London interview – Student 8

CHRISTINE INTERVIEWS A

Ex 1st Interview

C What do you think you already know about language, what are your strengths? I mean we identified needs and weaknesses, what do you think your strengths are, what do you think you already know?

A I don't know it's hard to say

C In terms of spoken or written English. I mean obviously you speak the language, you write the language so

A I do find it quite hard to get things down, you know if I'm, you know I can think of what I want to write but then actually to put it in words. But I find that quite difficult I think I'm, I'm more of a spoken person than a written person

C Right, so if we think of your past experience why do you think that's happened?

A I think a lot of it's probably to do with my parents, both my parents are sort of you know, my Mum's a local preacher and my Dad does

C Ah right

A He does quite a lot of lecturing, so I think that, it's always been there, I've never been, a lot of people are afraid to speak in public and get really nervous but it doesn't bother me because I've, I've been brought up in that and

C Right, right. So where do you think perhaps the reservations about your written English stem from?

A Probably because most, most of the things that I've ever done sort of in previous jobs they've been mostly spoken. I've done a lot of telephone work and accounts work so I've never had to, so you know apart from when I was at school I've never had to do a lot of written English. So now I've actually come to college I'm finding it quite difficult. My husband's quite frustrated because he writes a lot of reports and things, so to him it's and he says to me when I'm sort of stuck with these assignments, I say "but I don't know what to write". "How can you not know what to write?" and he'll pick up the book, one of my books that's nothing to him, you know sort of an education book and he will just say "L well, why can't you do it like that?" and I say "Cos I can't" you know so

C It's second nature

A Yeah, it is to him because he's always done a lot of written reports but to me

CHRISTINE INTERVIEWING D

Essex 3rd Interview

C I'm going to talk about what you already know about standard written/spoken English but before we do that perhaps I'd better explore what you think I mean or what you think the term standard English means or when you think of standard English what you think it includes.

D I think it includes all the language that we actually speak and the different forms, obviously all the verbs and adverbs, the standard English of say the Queen. But obviously I know that a lot of people have sort of different accents and different things

grammar

Queen's
Eng

accent

C Right so you've mentioned accent and you've mentioned grammar because you've mentioned verbs and things. So grammar, accent, anything else?

D I mean some people have different forms of language don't they as well

register

C Do you think there is a difference in spoken and written, are you making a distinction between spoken and written standard English or are you covering more or less the same thing?

spoken
written

D More or less the same things I would say

spoken and
written st
equated

C OK Well what I'd like to do is I'd like you to think what you think you already know yourself, your own knowledge about standard written English first of all perhaps if we separate them out. What do you think you already know about standard written English? I'm going for your strengths really

D Are you talking about the verbs?

grammar

C Just yeah, your definition of standard written English was to do with grammar, it could be to do with accent

D No, it's obviously putting, getting, I mean from the assignment I did it's getting the right context of having a subject and an object and a verb and everything in the right place and the right way round and obviously the adjectives describing the verbs and all that

syntax

P
confusion
over words
class

C So what do you think you already know, how secure do you feel?

D From doing, I mean obviously it was a long time since I was at school, so from doing what we've recently done I've sort of learnt a lot from doing that

collect

C Right so a lot of that knowledge has come from what we've been doing in college.

D Yes that's right 'cos obviously it's been along time since I was at school

C Right yes. Can you remember back to what you actually learned at school. I'm not going off on a

CHRISTINE INTERVIEWING D

Essex 3rd Interview

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colloc

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C Right yes. Can you remember back to what you actually learned at school. I'm not going off on a

Interview 4

London

Q: Um when you were growing up at home, would you say you and your family spoke standard English or non-standard English?

A: Non-standard English.

Perceptions Family
- non-st.

Q: Right. And how about when you spoke with your friends?

more non-st
degrees!

A: Uh - even more non-standard

Q: Even more non-standard. Right. So what sort of forms of non-standard. Why do you say that you were speaking non-standard.

A: Uh it was uh slang terms and because I came from Harlow they - it was like a - almost like a different..

slang.

Q: That right, yeah.

A: ..type of language and - Oh you're speaking Harlowese - sort of phrase that they would give it.

region /
class?

Q: Right. Can you think of any features that are particular Harlowese? That are different from Essex?

A: Um -

Q: Is it phrasing, vocabulary or is it accent? Both?

complexity
of spoken
lang

A: Yeah I think it's a combination of all of it. It was almost like how could you turn a sentence into one word and even that one word was almost like a slang in itself.

Q: Right. So was that to do with your peer group or was that just generally across generations?

A: Well

Q: 'Cause I'm not being

Harlow's
tradition

A: Apart from 'cause it's almost like there's two generations in Harlow anyway. You've got the real older, older generation - almost into elderly and

generation
- lang
changes.

Q: Yeah

A: You know and then you've got this other generation and it's all mixed

Q: Mm hm.

A: Because Harlow is Pram Town, so you've got a lot of influence of young people and young adults and parents um

Q: Coming from where?

A: 'Cause they all came from London after the War.

London
influence

Q: Right

A: And so that's why they called it Pram Town. Because you had all these young women.

gender
& young
M. / Roy

Q: When you - sorry, say that again?

A: Pram Town

Q: Oh Pram. Pram Town, right.

A: Because it was all these young families.

Q: [Simultaneous] Oh I see. Right.

A: In fact, there's a big thing. There's even been a show written about

Q: Oh

A: our London Pram Town and

Q: I've not heard the term before

A: Yeah

Q: Oh right

A: And that's quite a strong influence so even with say people who are older than me, um, they would still have that kind of influence on the way they spoke and to each other and you know other families and it's - it's sort of almost like passed down

generational

Q: Right

A: But it's like the kids who extend on it.

lang
change 5
over time
- in use
Holliday
| Anticipation

Q: Right

A: And make it

Q: So it's developed from the East End or wherever from the London that they claim is changed, really

London
changes
region
class
mobility

A: Yeah

Q: Right. I find that interesting. So would you say so as the younger generation are still adapting?

A: Yeah

lang -
not static
dynamic nature
of
spoken
language

Q: ... so the whole thing is changing generally. And could you identify Harlowese from accents, do you think or

Q Right. What about word classes. Things like adjectives, verbs

A Yeah. I mean I done those when, you know, secondary school – that kind of thing but

non-st.
use

Q Mm

comment clause

A Not since

Q Not since, right. So did you have formal grammar teaching – you know explicit grammar teaching at secondary school that you can remember?

A Vaguely, yeah. Yeah

Q Right.

A I remember doing things like verbs and adverbs^{um} but I can also remember getting quite sort of lost with them and I sort of tend to switch off a bit

gr. at school?
lack of interest

Q Right. So was that done as exercises or from your writing or

A No exercises. It was, you know

decontextualised

Q Sort of out of context

A Yeah

Q Right, right. So did you feel confident at it when you were at school or just not

A No

Q Disinterested or

A No, yeah, no I didn't feel confident at all and um even though, you know, I felt that my sort of creative writing was always, you know, quite good

lack of confidence
get school
living v. l. t

Q Mm hm

A Sort of you know these – the literature – the English literature side of things I was sort of always fairly good at what analysing meanings of texts if you like but not all the technical

meta-language

Q Terminology. Right. Um, do you feel explicit grammar teaching perhaps in the way we're doing it now, almost, will help in any way? Do you think it's necessary?

A For me or for young children

Q For you – no for you.

A I don't know really. Because I'm s -- I still don't feel that confident

not confident to teach

Q Right. What would help to improve that confidence?

A I s -- I don't know. Perhaps just more – I'm doing it now

APPENDIX 6 Exit Audit

This audit was an internally produced paper (1998/99) designed to assess trainees' knowledge/understanding of English as specified in Section C of Circular 4/98.

English Exit Audit

Duration of Audit 1 hour 30 minutes

Write your answers in the space provided in this booklet

Attempt all the questions in all the sections

Candidate number

Date

Note to candidates

This audit is carried out to provide evidence that you have the required subject knowledge and understanding of English to satisfy the requirements of Circular 4/98

Section A *Lexical Knowledge*

- 1) How many phonemes are there in each of the following words?

hat though ever steady chaos

Write either “d” (consonant digraph) or “b” (consonant blend) for each set of underlined letters in the following words:

sh ip spl ash poa ch tr ail th at

Underline the trigraphs in the following words:

Sight hedge watch

Split the following words into onset and rime

String pack

- 2) Underline the inflectional suffix in each of the following words, giving an explanation of its function:

Happiest

Taller

Walked

Toys

Boy's

Add a derivational suffix to the following words to create a new word class:

Example pure ity purity (adjective to noun)

Or pure ify purify (adjective to verb)

Nation

Marginal

Happy

Wonder

Fulfil

3) Separate the following words into prefix, stem and suffix, as appropriate:

[illegible]

Reappeared

Detoxify

Wastage

Disagree

Returning

What does each prefix mean in the following examples?

Return

Anticlockwise

Antechamber

Unlock

Contraception

4) Add the appropriate past tense suffix to the following words:

Sip wait

Bat wail

Devise a helpful spelling rule that would help pupils spell the examples of the past tense words you wrote above.

Add the appropriate past tense suffix to the following words:

Pocket regret

Proffer defer

Devise a spelling rule to explain when to double the final consonant in the two syllable words above.

5) Provide an example of a homonym. Give two meanings.

Provide an example of a pair of words which are homophones.

Provide an example of a pair of words which are homographs.

Provide a synonym and an antonym for each of the following words:

Synonym

Antonym

Love

Old

Section B *Grammatical Knowledge*

The following sentences are written in non-standard English. Rewrite them in standard English.

We was late for work.

We done our homework on the train.

She didn't want none of it.

Give me them books.

He don't like me no more.

What is the difference between dialect and accent?

How would you define standard English?

Word Classes

Give the word class for the word "*round*" in each of the following sentences and state the criteria you used to determine the class:

He was a square peg in a *round* hole.

Buy a *round* of drinks.

The wheels on the bus go *round*.

They were seated *round* the table.

I *round* up the cattle.

Phrases

Underline the noun phrases in the following sentences:

The old man ate the chocolate cake.

My friend bought a bunch of tulips yesterday.

The ancient monument collapsed.

Look at the following phrases. Each of these phrases has a noun as head. Underline the head.

(a) the dog

(b) a moderately short programme

(c) some very old cars

(d) six bags of wholemeal flour

(e) very dirty marks on the walls

Underline the verb phrases in the following sentences and identify the lexical verb:

(a) The grass should have been cut.

(b) The birds were singing.

Clauses

Divide the following sentence into subject and predicate:

The greatest magician of all time performs here next week.

Identify the object and the indirect object in the following sentences:

Nathan gave Sarah her breakfast.

Freda sent a parcel to Henry.

Mary owed Marcia a pound.

Sentences

Expand the following simple sentence,

The cat sat on the mat.

So that it becomes .

a) a compound sentence

b) a complex sentence

Punctuation

Write two sentences illustrating the correct use of *its* and *it's*.

Punctuate the following phrase in two different ways by using an apostrophe. Explain the difference in meaning.

The girls home

The girls home

Punctuate the following sentence to indicate direct speech:

I hate doing audits said the student although I am glad of the opportunity to show my knowledge

Put the following sentence into reported speech:

“ Nearly finished!” said the student.

Section C Knowledge of Textual Features

Cohesion and organisation

Write a set of instructions for a simple game under the following headings:

NAME OF GAME

EQUIPMENT

HOW TO PLAY

Underline the cohesive ties in the following sentences:

We assembled in the hall. Then the headteacher arrived.

The tutor said that was the last audit we would have to do. We certainly hoped so.

The cat meowed pitifully. It was hungry.

List three stylistic features of either tabloid journalism or advertising. You may wish to include layout, vocabulary choice or syntactic structures. Illustrate your answers with examples.

1)

2)

3)

List four main characteristics of the fairy tale genre.

The following stylistic features are often found in poetry. Provide an example of each of the following:

Alliteration

Simile

Metaphor

Personification